

Barcode : 2990100061295

Title - Versatile Genius

Author - T.V.Kapali Sastriar

Language - english

Pages - 328

Publication Year - 1986

Barcode EAN.UCC-13



2990100061295

VERSATILE GENIUS

Commemoration Volume
on the Occasion of
the Birth Centenary of
SRI T. V. KAPALI SASTRIAR

1986

Editor : M. P. PANDIT

Publishers :

DIPTI PUBLICATIONS
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY-605 002

Price : Rs 25/-

Printers :

RAJSRI PRINTERS
156 AVVAI SHANMUGAM ROAD
[LLOYDS ROAD] MADRAS 600 086

CONTENTS

Section One

INTRODUCTORY: SRI KAPALI SASTRIAR	...	3
— <i>M. P. Pandit</i>		
SRI KAPALI SASTRIAR: HIS THOUGHT	...	8
— <i>M. P. Pandit</i>		
SRI KAPALI SASTRIAR	...	11
— <i>M. C. Subrahmanyam</i>		
A VIBHUTI	...	19
— <i>Dr. V. S. Sethuraman</i>		
MULTIPLE GENIUS	...	30
— <i>R. R. Diwakar</i>		
SHEPHERD OF THE DIVINE LIFE	...	33
— <i>V. Murugesu</i>		
THE YOGA AND THE VIDYAS	...	43
— <i>Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar</i>		
“LIVING FOR THE DIVINE”	...	61
— <i>Prabhakar Nulkar</i>		
KAPALI SASTRY AS A COUNSELLOR	...	85
— <i>Prof. H. L. Auluck</i>		
INDIAN HERITAGE	...	90
— <i>Prof. K. Swaminathan</i>		
GOLD MINE OF THE VEDAS	...	95
— <i>Dr. Raja Ramanna</i>		
SOMA: MAN’S SEARCH FOR MEANING	...	109
— <i>Santosh Krinsky</i>		
VEDIC KNOWLEDGE IN MODERN CONTEXT	...	125
— <i>Dr. R. L. Kashyap</i>		
JIVANMUKTA AND THE SUPERMAN	...	157
— <i>Keshavmurti</i>		
KAPALI SASTRIAR AND THE CREATIVE WORD	...	181
— <i>Rand Hicks</i>		
THE LITERARY SIDE OF SRI T. V. KAPALI SASTRY	...	188
— <i>Prof. B. H. Sreedhar</i>		

SRI SASTRIAR AND THE MAHARSHI	...	193
— <i>S. Shankaranarayanan</i>		

Section Two

SRI KAPALI SASTRY AND THE UPANISHADS (I)	...	203
— <i>Prof. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao</i>		
SRI KAPALI SASTRY AND THE LIGHTS ON THE UPANISHADS (II)	...	230
— <i>Prof. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao</i>		

Section Three

KAVI YOGI SRI KAPALI SASTRY	...	273
—(<i>Inaugural Address: Centenary Celebrations</i> <i>3rd September 1986</i>) <i>Dr. K. Venkatasubramanian</i>		
SRI KAPALI SASTRIAR	...	289
—(<i>at the Ashram Centre of Education</i> <i>6th September 1986</i>) <i>M. P. Pandit</i>		
KAPLI SPEAKS	...	301
— <i>Prabhakar Nulkar</i>		

SECTION ONE

SRI KAPALI SASTRIAR

M. P. PANDIT

Sri Kapali Sastriar, whose birth centenary is being observed on September 3, 1986, has come to be known more and more after his passing in 1953 than before. For he always avoided limelight and chose a life of silent dedication to the Ideals he cherished. He was an example of perfect self-effacement in the best traditions of the *Aryan* who represents the noblest and the highest aspirations of humanity.

Sastriar was a multiple personality. He excelled in whatever field he worked. Among his several services to the national heritage, the one which comes most prominently to the mind is his solid contribution in building a strong bridge between the ancient past and the evolutionary thought of the present. Following the trail of his Masters, first of Vasishtha Ganapati Muni and then of Sri Aurobindo, he unearthed many a truth that lies concealed within the cryptic utterances of the Veda. His was not a scholastic approach, though he was an impregnable scholar in his own right. He delved into this hymnal on the strength of his inner experience, verified the verities that are perceivable to the awakened eye, in his own yogic realisations and then went on, in his sixtieth year, to write his classic commentary on the first Ashtaka of the Rig Veda in virile Sanskrit. Entitled *Siddhanta-jana*, the mystic collyrium that activates the inner

sight, these thousand pages of exposition, prefaced by a *Bhumika*, Introduction, explaining the context and the method of the interpretation, have come to be increasingly resorted to by earnest aspirants for the Vedic Knowledge, both in India and abroad. Sastriar's forte is simple yet powerful diction in handling the Sanskrit language. He wrote in four languages, true, English, Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit; but the last, the tongue of the Gods, was most natural to him. For he lisped his first alphapet in Sanskrit when he was an infant and had completed his first traditional reading of the Ramayana by the time he was seven. In his exhaustive commentary on the hymns of the Veda, he traces an often missed continuity in the thought and experience of the Indian mind and soul from the Vedic beginnings to the present day, through the Upanishads, the Tantras, the Epics, the Puranas. He explains the legends in the Puranas with reference to the seed-truths enshrined in the older texts and not vice versa.

His writings on the Upanishads, especially on the various Vidyas, disciplines, that are inadequately described in verbal terms in the originals, are a treasure of mystic lore. His *Lights on the Upanishads*, are manuals of sadhana and present in detail such lines of *upasana*, intensive effort, as the interiorisation of consciousness, plunging into the heart-cave, expansion of being so as to merge in the manifestation of the universal Life-force, ascension beyond the mind into the altitudes of the Spirit, and—more important—the way to discover

and taste the Delight of existence that underlies all creation. Indeed, he leaves certain details unsaid in the sacred tradition of the Guru-Shishya communication, but what he has expounded is a veritable mind of instruction, guidance and inspiration.

Sastriar regarded himself as a tantric, first and last. For ever since his childhood he was brought up in an environment of *Sri Vidya*, the purest form of worship of the Divine Mother, alongside his family obligations to the Vedic heritage. He regards and proves that these two traditions, the Veda and the Tantra, have a common origin and have developed on parallel lines, complementary in fact. He explains the rationale of the different schools of Tantra in terms that are satisfying to the modern intellect. He de-mystifies what has been commonly regarded as mysterious.

And then comes what was most intimate to him, *yoga*. After practising some of the main lines of discipline in the esoteric Wisdom of the Vedic and Tantric inspiration, he was led, early in his career, to the Feet of Sri Ramana Maharshi who, at that time, was still living in the hill caves of Arunachala. Sastriar developed his inner life in the mould of the Sage's Path of Quest for the Self—an austere, psychological discipline—and arrived at certain radical realisations before he found himself literally transported into the mighty presence of Sri Aurobindo. That is another fascinating story which requires separate telling. Suffice it to say that he spent over 25 years of the rest of his

life in the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, devoting himself to the thought and practice of Integral Yoga. He wrote widely in exposition of the finer and intricate aspects of the Poorna Yoga perfected by the Masters. He translated into Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu some of the key works in this Teaching. He was a poet whose abilities were appreciated by Sri Aurobindo—himself the Poet of the Age—especially in his rendering of the first canto of *Savitri*, admittedly the most difficult in the epic.

He followed several ways of spiritual quest in the course of his concentrated life and drew the utmost from each before he proceeded to synthesise all in the depths of his soul. Though the Path of Knowledge, Jnana Marga, was his natural line, especially in his earlier years, his emotional being was always athrob behind the seemingly stern exterior. He was a standing exemplar of the synthetic note of the Gita in as much as he was at once a mature Jnanin, a pure Bhakta and a perfectionist in Works. He had a wide grasp of the nature and problems of the human being and he went all his way to help whenever any one sought it. One could say he was a spiritual pragmatist in the finest sense.

Sastriar was a profound votary and a masterful adept in the Mantra Sastra. It is on record how his Mantra Japa turned the tide in the lives of many in distress. The Mother confirmed that when he recited an invocation during his meditations, the very Deities were present almost physically

and the effect of their response was materially perceptible.

And more. Kapali Sastriar had a profound knowledge of the sciences of astrology, Rasa Sastra, Ayurveda. He used to be consulted by practitioners in these fields and he was very liberal in his communication. His knowledge of the occult side of life was as deep as the spiritual. He was no seeker for his solitary salvation. He spread himself out in different dimensions and acted upon situations that called for merciful interventions. It is not generally known that he was a patriot involved in secret revolutionary activity for winning freedom for his motherland in the first decades of the present century under the leadership of another Master-Spirit that was Vasishtha Ganapati Muni. He included in the circle of his friends fire brands like Subramania Bharati, V. V. S. Iyer and others.

In commemorating the Birth Centenary of such a unique versatile genius like Kapali Sastriar, we honour not only a pre-eminent son of India but equally a thinker and idealist of world-class. It is men such as him that have built this hoary value-based culture and civilisation on the continent of India and made it a perennial spring of spiritual inspiration. Moments like this are occasions to remind ourselves of our responsibilities as the custodians of the heritage of a dateless past.

(Courtesy: A.I.R.)

SRI KAPALI SASTRIAR: HIS THOUGHT

M. P. PANDIT

Sri Kapali Sastriar was a polymath. He excelled himself in whatever field he touched, be it languages, literature, philosophy, yoga, astrology, astronomy, Ayurveda, Rasa Sastra. Though he was a man of warm emotions and tender feelings, he is more known for his brilliant intellect which is patent in his various writings in Sanskrit, English, Tamil and Telugu. It was, however, an intellect with a difference. For Sastriar the mind was more a reflector of higher knowledge than a constructor of systems.

His most outstanding service to world-thought is undoubtedly his synthesising grasp of the different traditions of the past and the facility with which he has built a bridge between the ancient heritage and the modern time-spirit. In his approach contradictions are resolved and new light is thrown on many unlit corners of the religious, spiritual and occult traditions that have come down for centuries. His magnum opus, Siddhanjana, commentary on the First Ashtaka of the Rig Veda, explores the hitherto neglected psychological and spiritual sides of the ancient hymnal. Sastriar's interest in the Veda dated from his childhood. It had always intrigued him how the Veda which has been all along considered to be the fountain-head of Indian culture could be treated as a mere ritualistic or naturalistic text. His association with

Vasishta Ganapati Muni and later with Sri Aurobindo helped him to go deeper into the hymns and discover a priceless treasure of a spiritual, occult and yogic character behind a seemingly ritualistic exterior.

After a life-long study, verification in personal inner life and confirmations in other branches of Indian Wisdom, he began writing his commentary on the Rig Veda in his sixtieth year. In his *Bhumika*, Introduction, he presents his approach, deriving from ancient Rishis like Yaska, medieval Teachers like Ananda Tirtha and the perceptions of modern seers like Sri Aurobindo. He works out this psychological interpretation guided by the principles of the mystic symbolism of the Vedic Rishis in his verse-by-verse explanation. He follows the method of the Sastraic commentator of the classic age and brings to life Deities like Agni, Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Aditi and so on. He underlines their relevance to the seekers and humanists of the present day. For instance, speaking of the identity and role of the Ribhus about whom there has been considerable controversy, he establishes their apotheosis and continuing collaboration with the Gods as artisans of Immortality. Their work of synthesis and harmonisation of the different aspects of the human personality is shown to have a bearing on the shaping of the human society in the emerging future. He draws attention to the fine distinctions the Seers made between *Satya* and *Rita*, Truth static and Truth dynamic and also how

Ritam of the Veda became the Dharma of the Epics later on.

In his studies in the Upanishads, he traces the continuity of the Vedic spirit and resolves certain conundrums with the insight of the older texts. In a thorough analysis of the thought of the Katha Upanishad, he examines to what extent it is a delineation of the passage from the earth-world to the world of Truth and how the inner knots of the heart have to be loosened and untied before a conscious transition becomes possible.

Sastriar used to say he was a tantric through and through. He had been initiated into Sri Vidya, the purest form of Divine Mother worship, by his father at the age of five and he had delved deep into the lore of the Tantra. He finds astonishing echoes of the Veda in the Tantra, in thought and in practice. He proves how the *devi dvārāḥ*, divine Doors of the Veda correspond to the Chakras of the Tantra. He holds that the Tantra is as old as the Veda and both have a common origin. He lays bare the secrets of some of the legends in the Puranas on the basis of the experience recorded in the hymns of the Veda.

In a word, Sri Kapali Sastriar, spans the entire expanse of the ancient heritage and relates it to the present stage of human evolution in a convincing manner.

(Courtesy: A.I.R.)

SRI KAPALI SASTRIAR

M. C. SUBRAHMANYAM

M. C.—as he is universally known—is the oldest living disciple of Sastriar. He was his student, both at the Muthialpet school and the school of life. He has been responsible for many a public service the most notable of which is the Public Health Centre, Madras.

Sri T.V. Kapali Sastriar was born on September 3, 1886 in Mylapore and he was named after the presiding deity of the place, Sri Kapaleeshwara. He came from a family which, for generations, excelled in scholarship in Sanskrit, in the *upasana* of Sri Vidya and in the observance of rituals and ceremonials enjoined by tradition. The family belongs to the branch of Samaveda and the clan of Bharadwaja. Some of Sastriar's ancestors had performed *yajnas*.

His father, Sri Vishweshwara Sastry, was a great Sanskrit scholar and an ardent Sri Vidya Upasaka. He taught Sastriar Sanskrit and initiated him into Sri Vidya. Also, he went through the mill of studying Samaveda in the time-honoured traditional way. He scrupulously observed the prescribed regimen of Pooja, Parayana and Japa. By the time he was 12, he had read Ramayana twelve times over and had performed Sri Rama Pattabhisheka as many times. Every morning he would stand before the shrine of Lalita Tripurasundari

and repeat the Sri Vidya Mantra 1008 times. He had his English education in the Hindu High School, Madras, during the period when Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastriar was its headmaster. All this while, he was registering a two-dimensional growth: his mind was developing sharpness, sweep, height and depth; his exploration of the inner spiritual realms was proceeding apace.

When Sastriar stepped into the 20th century, he was just fourteen. Even at that young age he had attained an assured but quiet stature and standing in the world of scholars and spiritual seekers.

The first three decades of this century had all the glories of the Augustan Age and all the explosive features of a revolution. Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda quickened the dawn of this age. Tagore and Bharati in the field of arts and letters, Raman and Bose in Science, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo in Yoga and culture, Tilak and Gandhi in politics, caught the first light of this new dawn and worked towards ushering in its high noon.

In the field of Yoga, there were new efforts at recovering the light that had illumined the path of our ancient Rishis but which had been obscured by time. Three great men were parallelly at work in this direction. All the three had built up an inner life and developed an inner vision, though the altitude of each one of them was different.

Sri Aurobindo in a letter written in 1912 to Motilal Roy of Chandranagore says that Sri Krishna

had revealed to him the secret meaning of the Vedas, that he was shortly going to unravel the secret of the Vedas and that he felt that he could write a new Nirukta.

Sastriar, who had been taught to chant the Vedas in the traditional way, who had studied the use of the Mantras in rituals and who had noted the unfailing refrain in all scriptures and sacred texts from the Upanishads to the Puranas that the Vedas constitute the source and authority of all spiritual endeavour, found that the apparent meaning of the Mantras made no sense whatsoever. At the same time, he found frequent references to the secret character of the Mantras. He read Sayana's Bhashya on the Vedas. Bar some occasional illumination of some Mantras which had obvious spiritual import, it perpetuated the prevailing obscurity about the Riks. Sastriar was seeking light.

About the same time Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri—hailed as Nayana and Vasishtha Ganapati Muni by his disciples and admirers—scholar, poet, Sri Vidya Upasaka, *ashtavadhani*, astrologer, Mantra Siddha, directed his mind, illumined by years of *tapasya*, towards decoding the Mantras on Vedic Gods. Sastriar first met the Kavya Kantha in 1906. It was a case of Greek meeting Greek. He was deeply impressed by the astonishing range, depth and peaks of his mind and by his refreshingly original interpretation of our spiritual and philosophical tradition as enshrined in the Vedas, Upanishads and other sacred texts. Sastriar became

his disciple and by 1910 he had received from him illuminating help in the understanding of the Vedic, Upanishadic, Tantric and Puranic traditions. It was Kavyakantha who took him to Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Sri Ramana Maharshi meant one big leap for him in his inner life. The Maharshi who rarely touched anybody with his hand, placed his hand on Sastriar's chest and indicated to him the location of the spiritual heart centre. Sastriar who had mentioned this incident had not indicated how this *hasta-diksha* helped him in the development of his inner life. The affection and esteem in which Bhagavan Sri Ramana held Sastriar was indicated by his reference to him (Sastriar) as "Chinna Nayana" (Little Nayana). Next to Ganapati Muni, it was Sastriar who gave a brilliant and scholarly exposition of the teachings of the Maharshi through his *Sat Darshana · Bhashya*, *Ramana Gita Prakasha* etc.

Though Vasishtha Muni opened out new vistas of understanding of the Mantras and Gods of the Rig Veda, Sastriar felt that what he had received from his Master was not enough to launch him on the still foggy highways of the secret of the Veda.

In 1914 when Sri Aurobindo started redeeming his promise to Motilal Roy through his articles on the Veda in the *Arya*, Sastriar realised that here was a Seer of Rig Vedic vintage to whom the Vedas yielded the key to unlocking their secrets. Sastriar has said that he would read each issue of the *Arya*

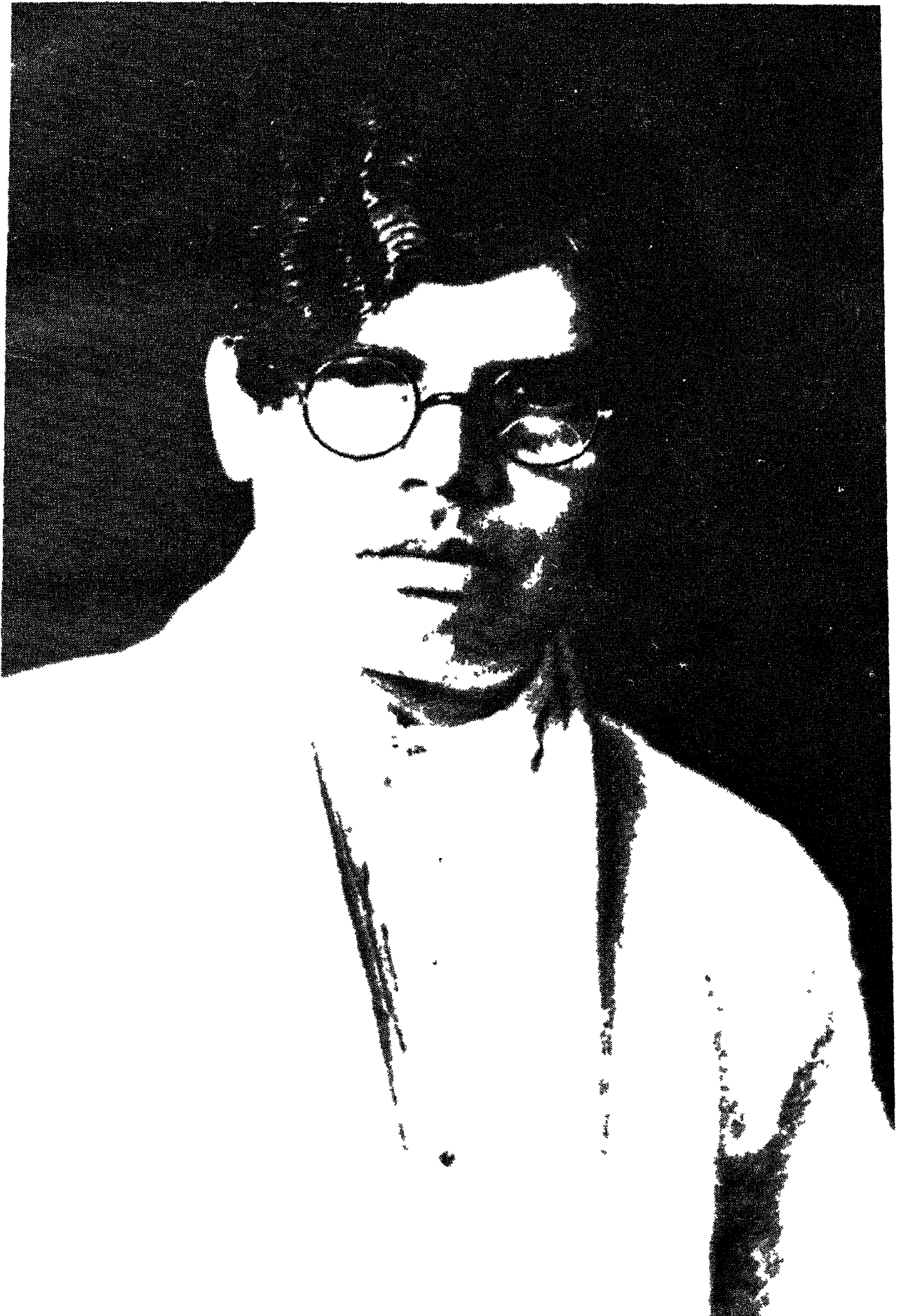
avidly and at one stretch and then read it again and again till the next issue arrived. His first meeting with Sri Aurobindo in 1917 was memorable. It is interesting to know that the meeting was arranged through Subramania Bharati who was in regular touch with the Yogi. Sastriar had found his ultimate master and realised his mission. He joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram later when it was formed and lived there for the rest of his life.

In the Ashram his life was one of total consecration and tapasya. Sri Aurobindo's writings on the Vedas and the Upanishads were in English. For the acceptance of scholars of traditional training and modern thinking, they had to be presented in the setting and style of some of the great commentators of old. Secondly, Sri Aurobindo's integral view of the Indian spiritual tradition had to be presented with appropriate scriptural support, interpreted creatively and convincingly. His studies and reflections on the Veda, Upanishads and Tantra took the form of articles in journals devoted to the exposition of Sri Aurobindo's teachings. He, however, took up for achievement the principal mission of his life, namely, a commentary on the Rig Veda in the light of the findings of Sri Aurobindo. This he took up when he was sixty. He had the necessary background for this Bhagirathan project—orthodox upbringing, and enquiring mind, arduous study as per traditional discipline, rigorous upasana, a quest for Truth which took him first to Nayana and then to Sri Maharshi, refuge at the feet of Sri Aurobindo

to complete the mission of his life and years of sadhana which exemplified the Upanishadic dictum that spiritual life is like walking all the time on the razor's edge and which earned for him the appellation, Kavi, from Sri Aurobindo himself. Sastriar wrote his commentary on the first Ashtaka of the Rig Veda in four years. Sri Aurobindo went through it and approved of it. Eye witnesses describe how Sastriar worked all alone, without any reference books by his side, drawing upon his phenomenal memory, waiting for the right inspiration to come before interpreting difficult words in the sacred text, literally burning the midnight oil.

His bare external life completely covered his flaming spiritual personality which reached out to new horizons and scaled new peaks of light all the time. His real life was lived in the soul of which hardly one or two knew anything. We know of him through his luminous works in English and Sanskrit—his commentary on Umasahasram, the classic of Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, on Ramana Gita and on the First Ashtaka of the Rig Veda. He wrote in Telugu; he rendered the Vedic hymns in chaste Tamil. What do we know about Vyasa, Valmiki, Kalidasa, Kampan and so many poets, philosophers, commentators and others? They live only through their works. Sastriar takes his rank with the seminal minds who have given a new and original turn to the understanding of our spiritual tradition.

In his writings on the Veda, he justifies the



Sastriar in his middle age

old adhyatmic interpretation of which Yaska speaks and that without contradicting other possible approaches; he draws upon his own yogic experience to confirm the wisdom of the Rishis. Expounding the Vidyas of the Upanishads, he shows how these texts are manuals of sadhana, continuing and enlarging upon the Vedic tradition—and are not revolts against the Veda, as propagated by some—and he unravels the mysteries of disciplines like the Madhu Vidya, Prana Vidya etc. Writing on the Tantra Shastra, he establishes its relation with the Vedic tradition not only in the realm of concepts and principles but even in their application to life. He presents the Tantra in its original grand setting of totality of manifestation.

He relates Sri Aurobindo's Thought and Yoga to the ancient Vedic scheme and clarifies many issues likely to cause misunderstanding viz. Jivan-mukta and superman, Mukti and transformation and so on. His *Mahamanustava*, laudation of the Supreme Goddess, Sri Lalita Tripura Sundari, is replete with yogic secrets and instinct with concentrated power of the Mantra.

As part of the present Birth Centenary Commemoration, a new edition of his collected works is being brought out. Five Volumes are already published. Three more, containing his writings in Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu are under preparation. Seminars are being organised in which scholars from different parts of the country are going to

participate highlighting Sastriar's many-sided contribution to world-thought.

Sastriar is not the last of the great Rishis of India. Others are bound to follow the trail blazed by him to discover new ones. His life has been a light of illumination; his writings carry a creative power which time cannot dim.

A VIBHUTI

DR. V. S. SETHURAMAN

(Senior Professor of English in several universities, authority in English literature, Dr. Sethuraman has had a close association with Sastriar).

In one of Her messages the Divine Mother declared (24th April 1957) that:

In the eternity of becoming, each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect realization.

On another occasion the Divine Mother said:

There are two complementary aspects of the liberating action of the Divine Grace upon earth among men. These two aspects are equally indispensable, but are not equally appreciated:

The sovereign immutable peace that liberates from anxiety, tension and suffering.

The dynamic all powerful progress that liberates from fetters, bondages and inertia.

The peace is universally appreciated and recognized as divine, but the progress is welcomed only by those whose aspiration is intense and courageous.

Whenever one thinks of Sastriar one invariably thinks of these two messages. Even a superficial reading of the major works of Sastriar would make it clear—especially when we consider their range, clarity and profundity—that he is one of the

Vibhuti—‘the manifest stress of the power and light of many a divine quality bespeaking the glory of the Divine residing and revealed in the essential, powerful, lovely and luminous aspects of things, men and gods and their kind (Collected Works Volume I, pp. 398-99)—come down to spread Sri Aurobindo’s message and insights by relating them to our tradition and freeing it from all those fetters which have been clogging its progress and development. His life itself was emblematic of the role he was to play. It was after the initiation into the immutable peace of the Divine under the guidance of the Maharshi that he came to ‘dynamic’ Sri Aurobindo and his life in Pondicherry was characterised by the all consuming aspiration, intense and courageous, resulting in his bringing down the Vedic gods once again for us. Such souls are best described in the words of the Master

The labourers in the quarries of the gods

The messengers of the Incommuicable

(*Savitri* Book 3 Canto 4. 357-8).

It is possible to mistake this unique effort of relating the new to the old—‘the work’ of a pioneer’ in assimilating ‘Tradition’ to the ‘Individual talent’—for eclecticism; and the charge was laid at his door. But Sastriar knew the maxim—‘that no man was written down but by himself’—and his reply to his critic brings out at once his remarkable firmness and humility. He said

A contemptuous silence would have been
the only right reply...had he not used certain

terms and thrown ideas which slyly, if not ambiguously extend the attack—using this small treatise as a jumping board—on the system of philosophy and yoga to which I have thoroughly given myself these thirty years and more...

The reply is thus intended not as a defence of himself but as a clear exposition of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo on which his *Tattvaprabha* was based. It is the spirit in which it is done that is even more significant. The article gives a clear account of Eclecticism as philosophy both in the West and in the East and proceeds to show how

‘a system is not built out of a previous non-existence; the system-builder does not start with a *nil*, *tabula rasa*, does not evolve a system out of his brain, he takes up the materials that are already there—in this instance the material has come down from the Vedic Age down to modern times—tests them, chooses and selects the substantial element, rejects the outworn forms, develops the latent suggestions, gives the system in a finished form, maintaining the structure intact, but supple not rigid so that it can accommodate, if it is comprehensive enough, fresh ideas and details of experience and truths discovered to fit in with the system and fall into their place in right adjustment.’

(Volume II, pp. 101-2)

The need for this long quotation must be obvious.

It describes his method. He distinguishes between assimilation/synthesis of the old and the new on the one hand and eclecticism which consists in adopting from all systems the doctrine or doctrines which best pleases one and tying them up together.

If in *Tattvaprabha* he demonstrates how the different elements in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy such as 'the ladder of Existence', the seven worlds or planes, the concept of Parinama and the ascent and descent, *sopana arohana*, are all (though they were all arrived at in and by his own sadhana) founded on the spiritual and mystical experience of the Vedic Seers. The discussion of *para prakriti jivabhuta* is a happy instance of the use of right kind of scholarship and logic. Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the text based on his own vision and experience is strictly according to Panini's sutras regarding the use of *Taddhita* suffix and Sankara's own interpretation of the compound formation in other contexts.

Sri Sastriar's theme in all his major works is the philosophy and practice of a divine life for man—not pure speculative philosophy—but a philosophy which is an attempt by the highest faculty of man namely reason at an intellectual translation of ultimate truths *arrived at, experienced and felt* by a deeper and higher consciousness of man. Hence his *Lights on the Veda* concentrates on the Riks as *mantras* and the Rishis as *mantra drastarah*. The words have a power all their own and it is this faith in the power of the Mantra 'that has left its impress on and taken deep roots in the soul of the race from

the Vedic times to our days...' The fact that the mantra was regarded as an extraordinary means of achieving worldly ends also not merely the other-worldly or spiritual and inner experiences—has helped him to show the validity of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the secret of the Veda.

The task he took upon himself in presenting Sri Aurobindo's interpretation to the 'orthodox ritualistic Brahmin was indeed formidable. He alone could take it up. It is easy for the young to accept and realize Sri Aurobindo's interpretations, realize their significance. But to convince the traditionalist it is not so easy. Sastriar is aware of the helpfulness of Sayana. He grants the merits of his commentary. But he also shows that Sayana was quite aware of the fact that the ritualists were just one of the three main interpreters of the Vedas... when he gives us alternative meanings...it is obvious he does so as a scholar...and speaking of the tradition inherited by Sayana he is careful to point out that it is a jumble of traditions that we find registered in his commentary...It is this spirit that inspires the scholarly introduction to *Siddhanjana* and the extent to which he has identified his consciousness with that of his Master is seen in many of his English translations of the Riks.

One of his friends and devoted admirers observed that Sri Sastriar could be loyal to Sri Aurobindo without being disloyal to Maharshi or Vasishta Ganapati Muni. May it be said that it was largely because it was Kavyakantha who led him to Maharshi; and it was his devotion to

Maharshi that guided him to the Master and the Divine Mother in whose Ashram he found the needed atmosphere for a full development of his many-sided genius.

Kavyakantha's new light on the Veda prepared him for the new approach outlined by Sri Aurobindo. *Satdarsana Bhashya* written in the manner of Acharya Sankara provided for him that foundation of immutable Peace on which alone the 'progressive harmony' could be built.

It is perhaps this background that helped him to talk with so much sympathy and understanding to orthodox brahmins on subjects like Srāddha, Bāhyapūja, Prānapratishtha and aspects of Tantrasadhana. He had practised them for years and the concepts were living ones for him. That explains the authenticity of his explanations. And where he knows that the orthodox or traditional interpretation distorts the text he says so. The first example is his interpretation of Kathopanishād where after showing the organic nature of the whole text and interpreting it in the light of parallel references from Kāthaka sections of Taittiriya Brahmana and the hymn in the Rik Samhita ascribed to the Rishi Kumara Yamayana, he draws our attention to Indian commentators who alter the text; and in a footnote he says

...Shankara changes the sense of the verse into its opposite by introducing words which are not there. The teacher of Dwaita school reads *Svargeshu* in place of *Sargesu*...

Sri Aurobindo reads the text as come down to us for centuries; in following him I have followed the text as it is known to the orthodox Pandits.

Sastriar's personality was essentially artistic and particularly 'poetic'; that was why he could so readily understand the 'poetic approach' to the Vedas and the Upanishads—a purely Sri Aurobindonian approach to these scriptures—and work it out in his commentaries on Upanishads. His division of the Upanishads into Vidyas/disciplines or sadhana mār̥ga has been suggested by this poetic response to the texts; and the identification of the Vidyas with the guru only confirms the view repeatedly stressed that the guru is the mantradr̥ṣṭa. And all the time and attempt is towards tracing the key words and metaphors of the upanishadic text to their Vēdic riks, the vedic originals.

This takes us to the very revolutionary view of Sri Aurobindo on the nature of language. Sastriar's articles on *The Vak of the Veda and the Throb of the Tantra*, *Sphota and the spoken word* and the note on *Chatvari Vak* while relating Sri Aurobindo's views to the concept of Vak in the Vedas and the Tantra anticipate a number of discoveries made by modern linguistic scholars. The most noticeable difference between the Western philologists and linguists on the one hand and the ancient Indian Epistemologists on the other is that whereas in the West they started the study of language from

without—that is from its Vaikhari form, the Vedic seers started their study from ‘within’

‘In all things that are expressed by Vak (speech) there are two factors we have to distinguish clearly in order to avoid confusion and arrive at the real character of *Sabda*. There is, first the external aspect, the audibility, the mere sound; the other factor is the subtler which is the essential sound element, vibrant with the meaning natural to it not audible to the physical hearing but clothed in the audible sound through which it expresses itself. The physical and the instrumental aspect is the normal sound *dhvani*, which is a quality of the essential inner sound *sabda*, which is itself sensible, carries sense with it, and is manifested every time a word is heard or uttered. The essential factor in speech is the real *sphota* and the outwardly audible sound is *dhvani*.’

This Vedic account of *sabda* establishes once and for all two things: (1) the need to go beyond and behind the *articulated* sound to get at the meaning and the development of the *inner ear* for it; and (2) *Sphota* as a manifestation of Brahman—leading to the idea that the Universe (*Arthaprapancha*) itself as a manifestation of *Sabda*, born of *Chhandas*. Sri Sastriar’s account of Bhartrhari’s definition of *sphota* on the basis of this Vedic theory is valuable in many ways. We have here striking anticipations of the theories of modern structuralists and langu-

age philosophers. The sentence to a structuralist is a linguistic unit. It may be made up of an ordered set of smaller units which may be called *words* which can be combined according to certain rules (of grammar) to form sentences. The meaning of a sentence is a function of *all the words* of which it is constituted and of the inter-relation between them. Language itself has been defined as a system of a finite number of minimal units (called words) and a set of rules imposing combinational restraints on these units. Compare again the concluding lines on *Sphota*—

Sphota, then, is the vak, the subtle voice which is the basis of all speech in mind-form, *vaci pratisthitam manah*; it is not the vāk, speech, of which mind is the mainstay, *manasi pratis-thita vak*. Sphota is not a fanciful concept, but a fact of psychological experience, a truth of our spiritual being in evolution. It is the expressional aspect of the soul; it receives the local sound-vibrations, takes in their sound-essence and sense-values and assimilates them into the subtle sound-stuff of its indivisible being. In its responses, it breaks forth surcharged with intelligence, *sphutati*, and raises subtle vibrations that are later vocalised. In short, it is the inner being, not the soul that is immersed in the unspeakable silence, but the soul that is emergent with a purpose—the purpose of discovering its own being in expression, *vyaktaye sva-svarupasya*. Here, in the inner

depths in the etheric regions of the Heart, it is the *antaro jnata* of *Bhartrhari*, the one indivisible permanent *sabdha* of Patanjali; there, in the Immutable supreme *akasa*, it is the *sabda brahman* of the Scriptures, the *nitya Vak* of the Rig Veda.

(Volume I, p. 149)

with Chomsky's crucial distinction between *competence* in language and *performance*. We see how close the *sphota vadins* are to the modern grammarian who says that linguistic structures are 'innately programmed in the human mind and operate both as a constraint upon language and as a means of shared understanding.'

It has been said that the opening lines of *Srimad Ramayana* give us an adequate description of the epic hero—the avatar that has become human,—Even more impressive is the description of the ideal scholar, soldier, statesman and the devoted disciple by the avatar himself. To have seen and listened to Sastriar is to understand the full import of that graphic account of Hanuman Sri Rama gives to Lakshmana:

The passage emphasises not only the qualities expected of a scholar-messenger but how these qualities are acquired. A study of the Rig Veda helps to cultivate *vinaya*, humility and modesty. Yajurveda endows us with a controlled memory. Samaveda gives the voice culture and eloquence. Vyakarana helps to be 'precise', relevant and speak to the point.

There is again a reference to the pleasing

gestures and the manner of delivery. A sensitive scholar in brief, clear and prompt but never in a hurry. He has what is called *trikarana shuddhi*. The words come from the heart, articulated in Madhyama Swara (neither high-pitched nor inaudibly low). The words themselves are well ordered (each in its place), pleasing to hear—almost charming. The harmony is such that it can quieten even the enemy who has raised arms to strike you down with his sword.

MULTIPLE GENIUS

R. R. DIWAKAR

(Senior statesman and scholar, Diwakarji has held several eminent positions viz. Cabinet Minister at the Centre, Governor of Bihar, Chairman of Gandhi Peace Foundation etc. Now at 90 he is as active as ever; the call of duty would not allow him to 'retire'.)

As a layman and an humble student of Sri Aurobindo I look upon Sri Sastriar as a multiple genius. So often do I turn to his writings when I need some clarification of the principles enunciated by Sri Aurobindo. One of the most original contributions of Sri Aurobindo in the field of Vedic scholarship is his rehabilitation of the Vedas as the fountain-head of Indian spirituality and of the deepest perception by human consciousness of the experience of One-ness of all Existence, Ekam Sat Viprah bahudha vadanti—Existence is One Indivisible Whole; learned persons call it differently.

Indian traditional scholars had always believed in this Truth of Truths, Satyasya Satyam. But western scholarship in all honesty and in the wrong belief that the Orient and especially Vedic India could not have reached spiritual heights visible in the Upanishads, had misled the world by saying that the Vedas were but poems in praise of Nature-Gods by a primitive ritualistic people. Perhaps they did not note that in the Upanishads them-

selves are clear references to Vedic insights clearly expressed saying, *Etad richabhyuktam*—thus has the *Richa* (Vedic Mantra) said. There are also references to ‘*Dheerah*’ (the yogis of the Vedic period) which are quoted in some Upanishads. Moreover, the Upanishads are not independent compositions but are attached to Vedas and are therefore called *Vedanta*—the end-portions of the Vedas. Thus the close kinship and indivisibility of the Vedas and the Upanishads is proof of the traditional spiritual thought-content of both the compositions.

It was not surprising that Europeans interpreted the Vedas in that way. But it was tragic that some English-educated Indian scholars too, who had lost touch with their roots, followed suit.

However, in the great adventure of reinterpreting the Vedas to us along the lines of Sri Aurobindo, Sri Sastry played a significant part. He had studied the *Rigbhashya* of Madhwacharya, the originator of the *Dwaita* Philosophy in the twelfth century. Of all the Acharyas, he was the only one who wrote *Bhashya* on 40 Vedic Mantras, in addition to *Bhashyas* on the *Prasthanas*, namely, the Upanishads, the *Brahmasutras* and the *Gita*. Madhwacharya has clearly pointed out that the Vedas have an indepth spiritual (*adhyatmic*) meaning.

In addition to his ability to penetrate to the deep meaning of the Vedic Mantras which sometimes is not even on the symbolic surface, Sastry brought to bear on them his vast scholarship. For

example, the epithet 'Adbhuta' is applied to god Agni. The word 'Adbhuta' can be derived in different ways as it happens with many Sanskrit words. But Sastriar's wide scholarship has been able to hunt out its use in many contexts in the Vedas and elsewhere and to prove that that objective is mainly the attribute of god Agni who represents the Sun-God on earth.

Scholarship was only one of things which adorned the personality of Sastriar. He was a Spiritual seeker of the highest order. In the course of his quest for self-realisation in this life here and now, he had the good fortune of the grace of Ramana Maharshi before he joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. His writings reveal that he was equally conversant with the wide range of works dealing with the different ways in which the protean Indian mind had sought to probe and realise the Truth of Life. Sastriar was as much at home in Vedic literature as in the Agamas, the Puranas, in yoga, and in Tantra. It is these things which have made me refer to him as a multiple genius. On whatever subject he wrote, (and he wrote in four languages, Sanskrit, English, Tamil and Telugu) he wrote as a master and not as an amateur.

It is but so natural and apt that Sri M. P. Pandit who recognised in him his Guru, should have taken the lead in bringing home to the English knowing readers of today the Light-giver on a vast number of subjects of vital importance for the growth of the human being to its legitimate height.

SHEPHERD OF THE DIVINE LIFE

V. MURUGESU

(Attorneys-at-law & Notaries Public)

(A solicitor of standing in Sri Lanka, Sri Murugesu leads the Sri Aurobindo Movement in that island. He is deeply versed in the philosophies and yogic disciplines of India. He counsels many a seeker with a rare earnestness.)

The Blessed Lord Said: "This imperishable Yoga I proclaimed to Vivasvan (the luminous Sun-God), Vivasvan declared it to Manu (the original Man), Manu told it to Ikshvaku head of the Solar line".

*Gita : 4.1**

This is how the torch of Truth is handed down from epoch to epoch, generation to generation and Sri Kapali Sastry is one such in that long illustrious line of illumined souls who has influenced others and kindled in them the flame of aspiration. He was a teacher of teachers of the Divine Life. "The characteristic features of Indian culture have long been a search for ultimate verities and the

* "Krishna has declared it in passing that this was the ancient and original Yoga which he gave to Vivasvan, the Sun-God, Vivasvan gave it to Manu, the father of Men, Manu gave it to Ikshvaku, head of the Solar-line and so it came down from royal sage to royal sage till it was lost in the great lapse of Time and is now renewed for Arjuna, because he is the lover and devotee, friend and comrade of the Avatar."—Sri Aurobindo: Essays on the Gita, p. 137.

concomitant disciple-guru relationship. My own path led me to a Christlike sage whose beautiful life was chiselled for the ages. He was one of the great masters who are India's imperishable wealth. Emerging in every generation, they have bulwarked their land against the fate of Babylonia and Egypt."¹

Sri Kapali Sastry not only devoted himself to the deep study of Indian culture in its more intensified field of the spiritual life but also to imparting that knowledge to others through a steady, silent and ever-willing guidance to help them tread the path to God. It is this latter contribution which he made that will be referred to in this article as a tribute to his undying memory. He was a dynamo of spiritual power who in his unique and inimitable manner assisted many a soul to the Truth of human existence and the Goal of life. The legacy he has left us is seen in the person of Sri M. P. Pandit which alone is sufficient to assess his immense worth and value to humanity.

In a most enthralling book, "Mother and I"² which can find its place among the great spiritual treasures of the world is brought out the nobility and greatness and the unique personality of Sri Kapali Sastry and his abiding love for aspiring souls which has been the motive force in the selfless work he did during his terrestrial sojourn from

¹ Swami Paramahansa Yogananda of his guru, Sri Yukteswar in "Autobiography of a Yogi".

² "Mother and I" by Sri M. P. Pandit.

6th September 1886 to 15th August 1953. It is proposed in this article to draw freely from that book to reflect the contribution Sri Kapali Sastry has made to human life. Those who came under his benign influence and compassion were themselves fortunate souls who have had a divine destiny behind their lives. His guidance to those who valued the spiritual life carry the stamp of the teachings of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother at whose Feet he received the Grace in ample measure. In one of his letters he writes: "Health is essential for worldly life, equally, if not more for a godly life of our conception. May you have it in plenty is my prayer to the Divine Mother."³

Sastriar was a Sanskrit teacher at the Muthialpet High School, Madras. He resigned his post on 31st May 1929 and took up to the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sastriar's teacher was Vasistha Ganapathi Muni (known as 'Nayana') who accepted Sri Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai as his Guru. Sastriar also sat at the feet of Sri Ramana.⁴ In the spiritual firmament the stars appear lit by the effulgence of the Supreme Light, and so they are all in essence the same but set differently in order that their individual lustre will be seen the better. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar in his inspired work "On the Mother" wrote: "But the Guru-Sishya alchemic chain-relationship

³ "Mother and I" by Sri M.P. Pandit, p. 10.

⁴ "On the Mother", by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, P.257.

ensured a spiritual continuity and the Ganapathi Muni-Kapali Sastry heritage was to flow into and enrich the silent tarn of spirituality at Sri Aurobindo Ashram.”⁵ This tradition continues, and perhaps one might add, in the trinity of Ganapathi Muni-Kapali Sastry-Madhav Pandit.

In the guidance he gave to others Sastriar respected each station in the life of man, for according to the teachings of his last two divine Masters they had laid emphasis on the full development of man, his integral perfection. He wrote:

“Since you are a student and cannot take up Yoga in a regular fashion, the best thing for you to do is to note carefully your experiences whenever you get them and not to be depressed when you do not get any and wait till the time comes or when the education is finalised to know the significance of such experiences and to come under the direct influences of the Divine Master, of the Divine Mother.”⁶

“All life is Yoga” visioned Sri Aurobindo. Sri Kapali Sastry has therefore explained how even as a student one can prepare and pursue the efforts for spiritual living, though Yoga cannot at that stage of one’s life be done “in a regular fashion”. There is the erroneous belief that as a student one should not take up to Yoga, but he has explained through his letters how it can be done without

⁵ “On the Mother”, by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, p. 238.

⁶ “Mother and I” by Sri M. P. Pandit, p. 2.

interfering with one's student-life. This is in keeping with what other illumined men have taught. Many of us can recall the advice given to Sri Yogananda by his guru, Sri Yukteswar. Because of its importance and similarity to what Sastriar said, that conversation is reproduced:

"You have come," Sri Yukteswar greeted me from a tiger skin on the floor of a balconied sitting-room. His voice was cold, his manner unemotional.

"Yes, dear Master, I am here to follow you."

"How can that be? You ignore my wishes."

"No longer, Guruji! Your wish shall be my law!"

"That is better! Now I can assume responsibility for your life."

"I willingly transfer the burden, Master."

"My first request, then, is that you return home to your family. I want you to enter College in Calcutta. Your education should be continued."

"Very well, Sir." I hid my consternation. Would importunate books pursue me down the years? First Farther, now Sri Yukteswar.

"Some day you will go to the West. Its people will lend ears more receptive to India's ancient wisdom if the strange Hindu teacher has a University degree."⁷

⁷ "Autobiography of a Yogi"—Paramahansa Yogananda.

This same projected vision and the concept behind it is pursued and brought out more forcefully in another beautiful passage in which the gradation of life and the importance of the varying roles we have to play is stressed:

“Success is sure to crown your efforts, if you persevere noiselessly and quietly, consistent with the part you are called upon to perform as a youngster, as a son, as a student, as a man-in-the-making, as a soul aspiring for a higher Divine Conscious Presence with all its constituent Light, Power, Peace and Bliss.”⁸

Sastriar’s teachings are not parochial, nor are they circumscribed. He tells us that we must flower out in full bloom, for perfection is an aspect of Divinity.

He was the repository of love behind his serious countenance. It is this love that flowed through him which touched the Mother from whom he received constant darshans and was bathed with Her effulgence and consumed by her White Light.⁹ The following passage will give us an insight into the love that welled from his heart through his pen. This was the same chord that, one may say, which bound Sri Pandit and harnessed him for the work he is doing both as a commitment to Sastriar who led him to the Mother’s Feet and in the abundance of his love:

⁸ “Mother and I”—Sri M. P. Pandit, p. 4.

⁹ “To me she is a Flame of White Light”—Sri T. V. Kapali Sastry—see his ‘Flame of White Light.’

“Now again you can write to me after the exams are over. That does not mean that you shall not write letters of importance which cannot brook delay. All that I mean is that you can give me immense pleasure by writing long letters when you are free and have leisure and not in this season when you are in harness. I repeat again that my love, my affection, my care, my service—take them for what they are worth—they are all there unqualifiedly and without reservation. But there is one condition for them to be fully and effectively at your disposal. Time alone can fulfil that condition. That condition is that you must grow to be ready for all the strength and fitness for which you aspire.”¹⁰

What caressing guidance from and what humility for a soul of so great a stature, and that to then a mere boy of 17 years. Many of us were not privileged to come within the aura of such a great personality, but seeing and having some contact with his illustrious disciple even a small measure of his spiritual aroma can be inhaled to suffuse ourselves. To pay a tribute to his disciple is also a way of paying homage to Sri Kapali Sastriar whose hundredth birth anniversary we commemorate this year in deep gratitude for what he has left us including his many writings of inspired erudition and scholarly works and above all his revelations

¹⁰ “Mother and I”—Sri M. P. Pandit, p. 12.

of the Mother.¹¹ Furthermore was it not he who made it possible for seekers of God to receive from Sri Aurobindo the description of the Mother's fourfold powers when Sastriar wanted to have from Sri Aurobindo an idea of Her true nature and the gamut of Her powers and personalities. This enquiry of his brought out that great work from the consciousness of Sri Aurobindo which is regarded as the 'Maitri Upanishad.'¹²

Sastriar was also a great psychologist. He had the capacity of bringing out to the surface the best in a person and making that to rule and guide his life. He did not condemn or discourage. His letters reveal his true personality and one almost gets the feeling that he is talking not only to the one to whom the letters are addressed but even to the reader of those epistles today. This reflects the universality of his making. How much one is uplifted when one reads this passage:

"No reminder from me is necessary since you have the necessary attitude already, though you are always expected to maintain it in an increasing measure and with intensity enough to be dynamic (i.e. effective) in conduct, in life, waking or sleeping—and not merely in mind as an ideal or thought. For I am convinced of the sensible marks of the goodness and worthiness and growing earnest-

¹¹ See 'Flame of White Light, and 'Collected Notes' and Papers of Sri T. V. Kapali Sastry, edited by Sri M. P. Pandit.

¹² 'On the Mother' by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, p. 255.

ness on your part to share the gifts of the gifted few and be counted among the good, the great, the noble, the wise.”¹³

This passage also reveals the depth of Sastriar’s vision. He was able to see the flowering of his disciple. He was a gardener in God’s orchard—tending, caring, pruning without hurting, fertilising and watering, giving the necessary shade and sunshine to the aspiring souls committed to his care. One has only to read of the association Sastriar had with the Mother and his deep response to her Divine influence in order to gauge the summits he had reached in his spiritual life. Will he not then transmit some of those gains to those who have accepted him as their guru as he did accept the Mother and receive from her bountiful storehouse of infinite spiritual Wisdom, Her Love, Light and Knowledge.

To attempt to assess the life and work of so towering a personality as Sri Kapali Sastry is too ambitious a task, and who are we ordinary mortals to venture out to scale such heights? Yet the attempt adds to our own growth and spiritual upliftment for we enter a grove giving out a fragrant breath by taking in which, even an infinitesimal part, we too are bathed momentarily in the purity of that Light. One wonders whether the description Lord Krishna gives of an ideal man will not aptly fit Sri Kapali Sastry—

¹³ ‘The Mother and I’ by Sri M. P. Pandit.

“Who hath nought
Of all which lives, living himself benign,
Compassionate, from arrogance exempt,
Exempt from love of self, unchangeable
By good or ill; patient, contented, firm
In faith, mastering himself, true to his word,
Seeking Me, heart and soul; vowed unto Me—
That man I love! Who troubleth not his kind,
And is not troubled by them; clear of wrath,
Living too high for gladness, grief, or fear,
That man I love! who, dwelling quiet-eyed,
Stainless, serene, well-balanced, unperplexed,
Working with Me, yet from all works detached,
That man I love! Who, fixed in faith on Me,
Dotes upon none, scorns none; rejoices not,
And grieves not, letting good or evil hap
Light when it will, and when it will depart,...
Linked by no ties to earth, steadfast in Me,
That man I love!”¹⁴

There can be no doubt that Sastriar had the love of the Supreme, particularly when the Mother accepted him into Her sacred fold.

¹⁴ ‘Bagavad Gita’ XII 13-19—‘The Song Celestial’ by Edwin Arnold.

THE YOGA AND THE VIDYAS

DR. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

(The writer is the senior-most authority on Indian writing in English. His record as the Vice-Chancellor of a major University, Vice-President of the Sahitya Academy, a constructive and creative critic, is unexcelled.)

Sri T. V. Kapali Sastry's sustained endeavours to reveal to the generality of aspirants the hidden 'lights' of our spiritual heritage—the veiled Truths of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Tantras—and, coming to our own times, the tremendous insights of Ramana Maharshi and the multi-dimensional Thought and integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo are set forth in several volumes in Sanskrit and English, Tamil and Telugu. For one who had begun learning Sanskrit from his father almost as a child, and read the *Ramayana* of Valmiki a dozen times before he was twelve, it was hardly surprising that Kapali Sastry acquired a mastery of the traditional disciplines (Tarka, Vyakarana, Mantra Sastra, Vedanta, Ayurveda, Jyotisha, etc.) by the time he entered his twenties. And his meeting the redoubtable Kavyakantha Ganapathi Muni in 1907, not only deepened, broadened and heightened his perceptions in Sanskrit learning in its varied ramifications, but also opened up great vistas in the ineluctable realms of the Spirit and brought him, in 1911, to the superlatively charged circle of the Maharshi's Light in Tiruvannamalai.

Sastry's phenomenal mastery of the Sanskrit medium thus explains itself, and his *magnum opus*, the Rig Veda Bhashya (*Siddhanjana*), his *Umasahasra-Prabha*, *Ramana-Gita-Prakasa*, his verse translation of the opening canto of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* and his biography of Ganapati Muni (*Vasishtha Vaibhavam*) and other writings doubtless constitute an impressive achievement. As for Tamil and Telugu, they were like the air he breathed. But how about his astonishing command over the resources of the English language? In his younger years he was a respected and highly successful Sanskrit teacher in Madras, and he may have gained some acquaintance with English literature as well, and also learnt to converse in English with ease. But the secret of his uncanny mastery of English lay elsewhere. While his links with Ganapati Muni and Ramana Maharshi had been forged already, Kapali Sastry happened—by the merest accident: but, then, is there room for 'chance' in our 'bootstrap' universe?—Sastry happened to pick up the inaugural August 1914 issue of *Arya*, edited by Aurobindo Ghose and issued from Pondicherry. And the opening sentences of the opening paragraph of the first article (the first chapter of *The Life Divine*) laid a spell upon Kapali Sastry:

“The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and as it seems his insatiable and ultimate preoccupation,—for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,—is also the

highest which his thoughts can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret Immortality...The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality”.

Surely a new music, with its connotative reverberations, its wide arches of comprehension, and its clear accents of experiential Wisdom. Sastry went on reading, and although he didn't perhaps quite 'understand' all he read, he nevertheless felt a strangely soothing stir of response in the deeper listening of his soul. He read on and on throughout the night, and “he repeated this entire reading” (in Madhav Pandit's words) “each night till the next Number arrived. And so he read, re-read and assimilated the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo”. And the feeling grew upon Sastry that “the Thought that was being propounded by the Seer was amazingly close to what was developing in himself” (*Collected Works of T. V. Kapali Sastry*, Vol. II (1979), P. 202). Where he had seen hazily as in the twilight hour, now the Truth blazed in all the radiance of the mid-day Sun. Reading the *Arya* day after day—laving in the living ambrosial waters of *The Life Divine*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and the rest—reading, recapitulating, losing himself in Sri Aurobindo's seductive prose rhythms and

mighty spans of Thought, aye, this was a sadhana like no other, and (to quote Madhav Pandit again):

“No wonder when he (Sastry) began to write two decades later, his writings were distinguished by a stamp of authenticity and carried the Master’s Teachings far and wide” (ibid., P. 202).

The encounter in the pages of the *Arya* of August 1914 was duly to be followed by a meeting in April 1917, and another in 1923, and now Sastry’s life found its purpose and direction, and he could write some years later to the 13-year old Madhav that Sri Aurobindo was “a very great person, in whom I found God”, thereby determining as it were the boy’s destiny as well (ibid., p. 212).

When Sri Aurobindo went into a completer retirement on 24 November 1926 and the Mother took charge of the now formally organised Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Sastriar felt more and more drawn to Sri Aurobindo,—and to the Mother too, in whom he saw Sri Tripurasundari, his *ishta devata* since his boyhood days,—and he noted down in his Diary:

“21.2.1928. The Mother’s Day.

Between 10 and 11 a.m.: Pranam to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Tears before and after...

31.12.1928:

Night: a little before 12 below the Meditation Hall.

Thus the last quarter of the last hour of the last day of the year, had me at the stair-case leading to the Mother's feet.

1.1.1929:

With the Mother, at Her feet:

In the first minutes of the first hour of the first day of the year...Received chocolate from the Mother" (*Collected Works*, Vol. III (1981) pp. 20, 29).

It was thus the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo that provided Kapali Sastry, in M. C. Subramaniam's words, "the atmosphere and the inspiration for an all-round enflowerment" (*Collected Works*, Vol. II, p. 209). Kapali's triple stances—discipleship to Ganapati Muni, devotion to the Maharshi, and *ātma samarpana* to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—far from conflicting with one another, only coalesced into a single flame of aspiration and progressive realisation. And when he started writing, not just for private recordation, but now for publication, the style (whether in Sanskrit or English) was the man himself, and in the apt language of Madhav Pandit "the philosopher...rubs shoulders with the poet, the Yogin with the grammarian, the critic with the creator" (*ibid.*, p. 202). And if the Sanskrit compositions carried perhaps something akin to the Kavyakantha's stamp, the English of the series of 'LIGHTS' volumes had the range and power, the opulence and organisation, the self-assurance and dialectical vigour of Sri Aurobindo's own richly cadenced and thought-laden marvels

of “the other harmony”. It is prose weighted with scholarship and consummate in its interior stitching, and although it is by no means a conscious imitation of Sri Aurobindo, it has the same innate dynamism and global sweep of comprehension.

For detailed consideration, let me confine myself to *Lights on the Upanishads*. This collection of seven essays appeared in 1947, six of them having come out earlier serially in the mid-forties in the *Advent Quarterly* and one in the second Annual of *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, then published from Madras and Bombay respectively. The central preoccupation is with Yoga, and how particular Vidyas or Sadhanas—as taught in the Upanishads, notably the Chhandogya—can be a help to the aspirant. Yoga is neither magic nor mumbo jumbo. It involves an understanding of Nature and of human nature, and the practice of disciplines that might quicken or accelerate the evolutionary drive towards perfection, the movement from the human to the Divine. It is from an integral understanding, through an integral discipline or sadhana, that the desired integral siddhi is to be hoped and striven for, and attained in the fullness of time. Self-change no doubt is the indispensable first step, but in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga, self-change is but a means of bringing about world-change and terrestrial transformation. And, indeed, in our tantalisingly interpenetrating ‘bootstrap’, there can be no real change unless *all* can ultimately participate in the Yoga of transformation fulfilling the Infinite’s promise to luminous Savitri:



Sastriar in his middle age

All then shall change, a magic order come
Outtopping the mechanical universe.

(*Savitri*, 1954 edition, p. 793)

Like Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra, many a mute inglorious Nara feels paralysed at the very time there is an imperative call to action. It took Krishna the eighteen cantos of the Gita to expound the 'Gospel of Action' and make Arjuna play his destined role. Yes, action must not be sought to be evaded, but there should be no taint of preoccupation with the 'result' or any possible 'reward'. Action, yes, but without a sense of egoistic concern or pride. The 'I' has no autonomous status, being inextricably involved in Prakriti's web of criss-crossing movements and relationships. Action, yes, and when there is no taint of anxiety for result or reward, no confusion of arrogance of personal responsibility, when in fact the ego's ceiling crashes to the ground creating a vacuum, the Divine will leap into the vacant seat of the charioteer and the 'action' will divinely fulfil itself. It is all easily said, but not amenable to ready practice, and besides 'Nara' doesn't always have a visible Narayana to guide him infalliably to the goal. No wonder many a nameless 'Nara' feels continually confused and makes spasmodic movements hoping for the best.

Aside from the Gita's perennial admonitions, assurances and commandments, there are the several 'Vidyas' or 'Sadhanas'—a dozen of them, perhaps—that are imbedded in the Upanishads, notably the Chhandogya and the Brihadaranyaka.

They are distantly paralleled, perhaps, by St. Ignatius Loyola's 'spiritual exercise that constitute the basic discipline of the Jesuit Order. The 'common reader' of the present time, whose knowledge is usually confined to feeble translations of the Sanskrit texts, is apt to miss these seminal Trees of life-renewal, being overwhelmed by the tropical richness of the many dialectical climbs of the incandescence of the grand Affirmations or Mahavakyas. Latter-day intellectual acrobatics have but led to "the ditches, to the trenches of philosophical warfare", obscuring the abiding intuitions the master-keys to Jnana and Karma (*Lights on the Upanishads*, 1947, p. 160). It is just here that Kapali Sastriar steps in to tell us of "the practical side which is the soul of these Teachings" (p. 149). He has chosen deliberately four of his texts from the Chhandogya, and one each from the Brihadaranyaka and the Kathopanishad, although Sri Aurobindo seemed to have given rather greater importance to the Isa and the Taittiriya. "We have the advantage", says Sastriar, "of studying parts of those texts not dealt with by Sri Aurobindo, thus enabling ourselves to appreciate them in the light of his Yoga and Philosophy in general" (*Lights*, pp. 150-1). This is, then, no exercise in derivative exegesis; it is more in the nature of finding corroborative evidence; in other words, it is a purposive extension of the Aurobindonian territory.

Five of the seven essays center round 'Vidyas' mentioned in the Chhandogya of the Brihadaranyaka: (1) Shandilya Vidya, (2) Prana Vidya, (3)

Vaishvanara Vidya, (4) Madhu Vidya, and (5) Bhuma Vidya. It is remarkable how each of these essays is structured like a piece of music, and it is as though the constant refrain is:

In my beginning is my end,
And my end is a new beginning.

Extensive hard-headed scholarship is pressed into service, and the reader is taken step by step—as in Swami Aiyappan's Temple with its 18 steps of ascent—and when the exposition concludes, from Here to Infinity is seen as a full circle: and only the language of silence, the unstruck melody of fulfilment and peace remains.

First, then, Shandilya Vidya, insinuated in Chhandogya Upanishad (III.iv.I). Man being a creature of will, and will being father to accomplishment, "He should make the resolve: *sa krautum kurvite*". Man is a thinking animal, and it is upto him to look about himself, discriminate between *preyas* and *sreyas*, the transient and the undying, and so learn to hanker after the good, build the ground of faith, and with an unfaltering certitude *resolve* that he will effect the definitive passage from now to eternity, from corruption to incorruption, from the human to the Divine. It is said of a particular religious order that its members start with a resolve, and then strive their uttermost to make good what they have set their minds upon. Shandilya Vidya begins with the resounding all-sufficing *māhavākya* "Verily, all this is Brahman", and sustained by its nectarean resonance, the sadhaka should resolve against the Nay and in favour of the

Everlasting Yea, and the definitive mental act of resolution is itself half the victory:

“The sadhana, then, begins straight with man, the mental being (*Manomayah Purushah*), whose position lies midway between the two extremes, the pure self-existent conscious Being and the inert inconscient Matter of which the gross body is made...Man has to renounce nothing, as he has nothing to renounce, for the mind and life and body are in their own kinds parts of the Universal; the soul itself is a ray and form of the Supreme Being.” (pp. 50, 61).

Renouncing the prison-house of one's egoistic separativity and affirming identity with the Illimitable Permanent, already the aspirant is on his way to Realisation. The right resolve, and the auspicious start in the right direction: can the desired or willed Goal elude the seeker?

Next comes Prana Vidya. While to resolve aright is a wonderful beginning, the aspirant has also to purify the instruments, reject the fraudulent, chase away bleak despair and breathe into the worlds within and without the nectarean Life-Principle. It is a definitive seminal act, a peremptory summons to New Life. Here the text from the Upanishad is a challenging benediction: “If one were to tell this to a dried-up stump even, sure, branches would sprout, and foliage spring forth” (V.ii.3). So potent, so irresistible indeed is this Vidya, that at its etheric touch, the sapless stump

itself can leap into sudden life, and death will die, and life, life, life will affirm its reality and omnipotence.

Third in the series (in my ordering) is Vaishvanara Vidya, almost a continuation, expansion and universalisation of Prana Vidya. Again the text is from the Chhandogya:

“In all worlds, in all beings, in all selves, he eats the food” (V. xxiv.2).

Life, life, of course, but life is not life when it permits self-diminution or self-limitation. The sky is the limit, the infinitudes and the eternities are the limit. Life, life, now rendered electrically free, goes into action, and the whole universe becomes its field. For whatever terminal or ‘beyond the beyond’ one’s consciousness may reach, it can but recognise itself, like the wanderer seeing his own reflection in the waters wherever he may adventure forth. The Purusha is not just the sum of the parts or limbs, he is the Spirit, the Self, in all things, what brings them into being and keeps them going. The microcosm is the macrocosm, the Universal Self is the Burning Fire in all things and everywhere. One must therefore ‘eat’ and live in the knowledge of the ONE FIRE multiplied endlessly and aglow in all creatures. Everyone, everything, is meant to house the Great Agni, the real Agnihotra. The One is the Many, the One enacts his own life in a million million situations and persons and creatures. This secret of secrets is taught by king Aswapathy Kaikeya to a group of

five seekers led by Uddalaka Aruni. Sastriar cites appositely a supporting passage from the Mother's essay, 'The Supreme Discovery':

"The individual I and the universal I are one; in each world, in each being, in each thing, in each atom is the Divine Presence, and it is man's mission to manifest it" (quoted in *Lights*, p. 68).

And Sastriar himself explains how Aswapathy teaches the truths of the Vaishvanara, the Universal Person:

"Anyone who so lives, lives also for other souls, for other beings around, for the rest of the whole universe...when he eats, he knows and feels that it is the awakened Fire of the Universal Person in him that eats...

It is a sadhana that preserves the Vedic tradition of the Universal Godhead, the Divine Fire, awake in man as the Self of his self, vigilant, active, guiding him to universalise himself" (pp. 72, 81).

What next? If the Yogi can universalise himself in terms of the Vaishvanara Vidya, what then? The answer is, 'Madhu Vidya'! Madhu is honey, or anything sweet. The Madhu doctrine teaches that the infinite diversity in creation is the manifestation of a secret Delight, the exemplification of a hidden harmony. In this cosmic drama of ceaseless creative ecstasy, everything and any part of it, the microcosm, is Honey to the Whole, and

the Whole—the macrocosm—is Honey to every minuscule or atomic part of it. And because it is Honey, the secret Delight, that abides in the totality of creation and in every infinitesimal part of it, therefore the exultant cry *Raso vai sah!* all is existential Rasa, all is existential Madhu, all is existential Ananda. In the Upanishad (Brihadaranyaka, II. v), it is triumphantly and repeatedly affirmed that this earth is Honey, this water is Honey, this fire, air, Sun, space, Moon, this lightning, thunder, ether, Dharma, Satyam, this and these and all are Honey, Madhu, Honey—what else? There is also the significant linking up with the Aswins, the twin godheads of Light and Power, Consciousness and Force, knowledge and Will, and it is thanks to these powers that mankind has inherited in exhaustible Madhu. In Sastriar's words:

“...the twin Divine Powers...are the riders on the path, symbolic of Force, especially of life-energy and nervous force; they are seekers of honey, Madhu, Gods of enjoyment, physicians, who bring back youth to the old, health to the sick, wholeness to the maimed” (p. 132).

And finally, Bhuma Vidya. This figures as the first in Sastriar's book, and is based on yet another Chhandogya text:

“In the purity of nourishment, *Ahara*, lies the purity of the stuff of being, *Sattwa*; *Sattwa* being pure, the immediate remembrance becomes constant and fixed; by this remembrance (*smriti*), there is a release from all knots.

To such a one, stainless, the Blessed Sanatkumara shows the shore beyond darkness; they call him Skanda, yea, they call him Skanda)” (VII. xxvi.2).

Like Vasishtha Ganapati Muni meeting the unknown Ramana in his Tiruvannamalai retreat and expressing his utter feeling of defeat at not attaining what he had set his mind on (although he had mastered all that had to be learnt and practised all the required disciplines), Narada too had once approached Sanatkumara with the desire to know THAT by which he could cross over to the ‘other’ Shore; and the Blessed Sanatkumara acceded to Narada’s request, and concluded with the passage above cited. The key insight of this Vidya is that “however arduous the Vidya or spiritual discipline that one adopts and follows to a successful end, it cannot by itself bring the Realisation of the ultimate Truth” (*Lights*, p. 11). There is Grace the supreme Power, and Grace should not just be taken for granted. *Tapah prabhavāt Devah prasādāscha!* Sustained askesis or Sadhana, yes, but Divine Grace too! In Sastriar’s words again:

“However high and arduous and assured the sadhana be,...however liberal, independent, self-willed and unaided by any source of strength and light the seeker be, however certain the result may seem, the result itself, the final goal, the consummation comes from outside the bounded sphere of the personal self of the sadhaka, from the Deliverer, appar-

ently as the fruit of the labour, or independently of it as a matter of Grace” (p. 19).

And this Grace of the Divine—the Grace of God or the Mother, of Sanatkumara, or Kumara, or Skanda—this Grace is the first and last mystery and benediction of the phenomenal Play.

And when the Goal has been reached, the Everest has been conquered, what next? Is the victorious sadhak, with his immersion in Infinity, to be lost to this “too too sullied” earth and its mass of purblind humanity still wriggling in the coils of their crass and abysmal ignorance? The Buddha stepped back from the brink of Nirvana, and patiently and for many long years played the redeemer-role of the Bodhisattwa. So too, in the Kathopanishad, when Yama offers three boons to young Nachiketas, first he asks for the freedom to get back recognisably alive to his angry—now mollified—father, Vajashravas. And explaining the real nature of the boon, Sastriar writes:

“...a capacity by which he can come back from the higher plane to the physical with the connection between this and the life beyond established...” (p. 95).

It is henceforth to be a two-way journeying for Nachiketas, this winner of immortality being enabled to return to the world of the as yet imperfect humanity to guide them too to win the New Life and help to create a new Heaven and a new Earth here, even here, “on his bank and shoal of time.” For the liberated, the ripeness, the readiness, is all,

and the way up and the way down are the same for him, for his personal preferences have been consumed in the white radiance of his deathlessness.

The second boon Nachiketas asks for is the knowledge of the Celestial Fire, or the triple power of consciousness that can loosen and finally snap the cords of mortality. For the third boon, of course, knowing the secret of Immortality, Nachiketas makes the firm choice, and is assured of the guerdon. *Sreyas*, not *preyas*: Eternity, not a time-bracket: and having won deathlessness here and now, he is ready and fit for the citizenship of all the worlds. One like Nachiketas who has won with faith, discrimination and determination the crown of immortality, as also the freedom to return to the world he has left behind to be able to effect its redemptive transformation, is the type of Yogin that flawed or imperfect Man really needs to be helped to make the decisive crossing of the sea of ignorance and reach the far shore of Next Future.

While the Vidyas have been mentioned in the preceding pages in a particular sequence (Shandilya. Prana, Vaishvanara, Madhu, Bhuma), it is not as though there is any traditional linkage or finality about the order. In the spiritual heavens, the centre is everywhere, the boundary nowhere. And anyone of the Vidyas somehow involves also the others, and you may begin anywhere, and perseverance, sincerity and above all Grace can see you safely through. The aspirant pilgrim, faced as he thinks he is by a choice of pathways, chooses

one—or is chosen by it!—and wends his way to the goal:

“The Bhuma Vidya...aims at the realisation of Bhuma, the Plenum, the Infinite Self. The Prana Vidya starts with the Life-Principle—The Shandilya discipline starts with the soul as related to the instruments of life and mind ...a most comprehensive vision that takes in a sweep all the complexities of the soul in its various aspects. The Universal Spirit, the Fire in each being and all... is the theme of Aswapathy in the Vaishvanara sadhana” (p. 155).

And all roads lead to the ultimate Reality, Atman, God, Brahman *saguna* or *nirguna*, existential Madhu or Ananda.

In the final chapter, Sastriar pointedly remarks that the several Vidyas, although identified and generally described, must remain for the reader no more than theoretical possibilities, for we haven't the living voice, the authoritative direction, of the Guru:

“...these Sadhanas, these methods of approach were transmitted by the Master to the disciple, and verbal instruction when necessary at all to accompany the initiation given was either not recorded or only briefly hinted at in these Scriptures. And this is so because the real sadhana begins with initiation and not with instruction...the Guru gives the method not the written word, not the spoken

word even; but he gives the Word in silence which is a power..." (p. 156).

In Conclusion: Sastriar's *Lights from the Upanishads*—like his other 'Lights' volumes—is no book to be sampled or swallowed in a hurry, but demands close study and long pondering over the contents. Commenting on Sastriar's writing, A. R. Ponnuswami Iyer remarks:

"His learning...became part of the very texture of his mind, the nerves and sinews of of this thought...behind every sentence of his writings stands a massive strength of reading and reflection" (*Collected Works*, Vol. II, pp. 204-5).

Naturally such writing calls for proportionate reflection and receptivity on the reader's part as well. Sastriar's brilliantly enlightening elucidations of the Vidyas carefully selected by him from the Upanishads and expounded in the wider background of the Vedas, have their own matchless value for beginner and scholar alike. But they are not meant to make the volume a 'Do-it-yourself Handbook' to the Yoga and the Vidyas. Nevertheless, *Lights on the Upanishads* is a classic in its own right, and our debt to Sastriar is immense for giving us a ticket-of-entry into these marvellous Vedic and Upanishadic realms of the Himayalas of aspiration, askesis and Realisation.

11.11.1985.

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY
“LIVING FOR THE DIVINE”

PRABHAKAR NULKAR

*(A veteran editor and versatile writer in Marathi,
Sri Nulkar feels the breath of the Spirit in the life
and writings of Sastriar.)*

As the birth Centenary of T. V. Kapali Sastry is being observed with high respect and solemnity, it will not be out of place here to recall the great expectations that surcharged the atmosphere in which Sastriar was born and brought up.

When the initial impact of the mortal blow incurred by the foreign conquest and domination was on the wane, the 19th century Indians witnessed the first awakening in the various fields of human activity. The spirit of India, far from being humbled and humiliated, rose from the abyss to recapture the glory of its past history and to scale new summits of culture and civilization. The Indian renaissance produced such great souls as Ramakrishna and Vivekanand, Dayanand and Narayan Swami, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Jyotiba Fule, Ranade and Surendranath Banarjee, Ishwar-chandra Vidyasagar and Pandita Ramabai, Ravindranath Tagore and Subrahmaniam Bharati, C. V. Raman and Dr. Jagdishchandra Bose, Raja Ravi Varma and Anand Kumarswami, Dr. Bhandarkar and Pt. Satavalekar, Sundari and Bal

Gandharva, Vasudeo Balvant and Kittur Channamma, Sir Jadunath and Rajwade...trodding new paths in their respective fields of activity.

But the giant among them was Sri Aurobindo, who with the collaboration of The Mother was destined to change the course of ancient Yoga and erect spirituality on the new pedestal. In fact they were the chosen instruments of Nature for accelerating the pace of evolution enabling man to reach his divine destiny "here and now."

Though an eminent 19th century English poet Rudyard Kipling proclaimed that 'East is East, and West is West and never will the twain meet,' fortune thought otherwise in her scheme of things. The seventies of the same century saw the birth of two great and noble souls, one in the East and other in the West and both had a meeting place on Indian soil.

The revolutionary impetus of Sri Aurobindo was evident in both the political and spiritual fields. In politics his onslaught was on the 'Maya' of English liberalism in whose clutches early Congress leaders like Gokhale and Sir Ferozshah Mehta were hypnotized.

Interestingly enough, his slogan 'New lamps for the old' held good in the spiritual sphere too as the firm grip of the age-old doctrines of Karmavada and Mayavada which proved a great stumbling block in the progress of human spirit, was to be vigorously loosened.

Intense political activities that led to his arrest and internment in Alipore jail, proved a

watershed in the life of Sri Aurobindo. After seeing Vasudeva around everywhere he completely and unreservedly put himself in the hands of God and consequently followed his Adesh to go to chandranagar first and to Pondicherry later.

Sri Aurobindo started the *Arya* in collaboration with Paul Richard. But as Paul and Mirra had to go back to France after the outbreak of the First World War, the whole responsibility of carrying out the magazine, fell on Sri Aurobindo's shoulders.

And what a way to fulfil this divine responsibility!

The very first issue of *Arya* thundered the arrival of a new Messiah. His esoteric interpretation of the Vedas stunned and dumb-founded many a traditional scholar but the revelations about the secrets were much appreciated by those who had open hearts and inquisitive minds. Prominent among them was T. V. Kapali Sastry, a budding youngster in his late twenties.

In spite of his conservative family-background and orthodox upbringing, Kapali was far from being happy with what he had learnt. Sayana's commentary on the Vedas left much to be desired. In fact Vasista Ganapati Muni, affectionately called Nayana and Ramana Maharshi, the great sage of Arunachala, spiritual wizards in their own right, were two mighty wings which enabled Kapali Sastry to reach new heights in the Vedic skies.

But even sky was not the limit for his quest for knowledge and self-realization. Secrets of the

Vedas still eluded him until he came across the first and fateful issue of *Arya*. The moment of truth had come after all.

It is said that he read the entire issue burning the oil till late night and reread it continuously until the next issue arrived. He must have thrilled to find the great Yogi of Pondicherry being on the same wave length with him. One would have liked Kapali to jump up, shout 'erueka' and straight-away lead to Pondy, taking the first available train!

But instead, we come to know that it took him full three years to have first meeting with Sri Aurobindo, another six years for the second 'darshana' and still another seven years to relinquish his job of Sanskrit teacher in Muthialpet High-school in Madras and settle permanently in the Ashram.

It seems that it was typical of Sastriar who took his own time to do things rather than act on the spur of moment and force the pace. Look how he took more than two decades to lift his mighty pen to elucidate the life and teachings of the Master and the Mother.

Once in the Ashram, to quote M. C. Subramanian, he completely and unreservedly consecrated himself to the pursuit of the Sadhana, he rarely went out of his quarters. And if at all he went out, he did so only to have the blessings of the Mother or to have 'Darshan' of Sri Aurobindo. Those who had the privilege of moving with him closely say that every second of his Life was like

walking on the sharp edge of a razor blade. He had disciplined himself into such unwinking vigilance that he was never found saying or writing or doing a thing that was not in consonance with the Truth of his Way of Life.

*

*

*

“The line of my sadhana precludes me from adopting any one as my disciple or child,” thus wrote Sastriar in a letter on 8-11-1930.

Still the Pandits of Sirsi had a special place in his heart. And certainly Madhav was not ‘any one’ to Kapali. In fact it was Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni alias Nayana, the illustrious Guru of Kapali, who told him that he saw a light about Madhav and that he should be ‘taken care of and guided properly to bring out the best in him.

Sastriar took the cue from the Guru and took charge of Madhav’s ‘incipient drifting soul’ and ‘forged a high destiny for a self-confessed weakling that he was.’

In the prophetic words of Kapali Sastry, “The Mother is sure to help your growth in her own way, in response to your daily prayers, that you may in one day in your life find that all along it was she who was herself growing in you, rather than helping your growth (27-6-34). Success is sure to crown your efforts if you persevere, noiselessly and quietly, consistent with the part you are called upon to perform as a youngster, as a son, as a brother, as a student, as a man-in-the making, as a soul aspiring for a higher Divine conscious Presence

with all its constituent Light, Power, Peace and Bliss.” (4-9-1934)

Kapali Sastry insisted from the very beginning the Madhav must learn to be more cheerful and avoid dejection. On 24-7-36, he assures, “always remember that Kapali Anna stands by you and will do all he can to help you to recover the many-sided strength that alone can lead you to the Glory that is yours.”

And when Madhav crossed the teens and stood on the threshold of youth, the Guru uttered the following birthday forecast, “In spite of all your weaknesses and fears, I noticed that there was something very high-aiming in the core of your very existence the outer manifestation of which was visible in a happy combination of three elements—simplicity, enthusiasm, wisdom...the main object in referring to these traits is to awaken in you a higher sense of your guardianship over those qualities, for they have a great spiritual and enduring value, in fact they are God-given virtues trying to find fuller expression in you, and you have to guard them, allow them to grow and bear fruit. For simplicity is an expression of sincerity which is the fulcrum of the soul manifesting in nature; enthusiasm is the vital push, ‘which is the power of the spirit within,’ while wisdom is the light of the soul which is the portion of the Divine Himself.”

As the time passed by the ‘love and oneness’ between Kapali and Madhav grew from strength to strength. Soon the two personalities mingled with each other and Madhav began to speak and write

the language of Kapali. The Mother herself stamped this unique relationship, nay 'adwaita'. When Panditji wrote his testament of faith on the truth of Her present Embodiment, the Mother read it and exclaimed, "It is Kapali from beginning to end". No doubt it was the proudest moment in Madhav's life.

For Kapali Sastry also it was not 'one-way traffic'. He too was influenced by the other side.

For instance, Sirsi's Anand Ashram and its surrounding spiritual 'atmosphere' had an immense impact on his inner life. He was sure that someone or some few in the house were inwardly open to spiritual influence and it manifested itself in the (outer) surroundings.

An extract from his writing speaks for itself. "The five months stay at Anand Ashram is a remarkable period in my spiritual life, even as it is to you an eventful period chosen to make steady your Sadhana and to transform those that are nearest and dearest to you and to get them initiated into a higher life by employing a variety of means—by a mild push or a helpful blow, by a fascinating experience or an impressive feat or by some trivial trick of the Divine. The whole thing was a Drama. Everyone did his or her part. Everybody had both spiritual and material benefit from it in some form or the other. I did my humble part and had a large share of the benefit. Our bonds have taken a definite spiritual shape. Let us proceed onwards and distance does not separate us. Pleasure has a spiritual value for me, and thought of you has proved

a pleasure to me. You can always rely on me for anything I am worth.” (21-3-1931).

*

*

*

The short span of fifteen years of the last century saw the birth of the great contemporaries—Sri Aurobindo, The Mother and T. V. Kapali Sastry. Each had quite a different background but the ‘spiritual trio’ was destined to meet and collaborate on the Yogabhoomi of Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo was the first to abide by—the Adesh of God calling upon him to ‘go to Pondicherry’. It was in April 1910.

He was followed by the Mother in 1914. “As their train speeded towards Pondicherry in the dawning hour of 29th March, Mirra had the occult experiences of a great column of Light at the centre of the still distant town and awareness of the Light grew more intense when her feet touched the soil of the place.....She met Sri Aurobindo in his residence and instantaneously recognized in him ‘the Lord of my being and my God’.....”

Sastriar’s spiritual odyssey is worth recording in his own words. “I seriously took to mantra-japa when I was eight. By the time I was twenty, I had completed many courses of various mantras. When there was no palpable result, I cried my heart out to the Divine. Sri Nayana then came on the scene and he gave me the eye.

Next I met the Maharshi. The personal attraction was irresistible. But I found his teaching too direct, immediate, seemingly simple, having

no steps in between i.e. the starting point and the goal, at any rate not practicable to people circumstanced like myself. It was only after I started reading the *Arya* I found what I wanted. I was convinced that Sri Aurobindo would not have written those words without experience. I saw Sri Aurobindo in 1917. Thereafter a series of far reaching experiences in my inner life commenced and they took me to Sri Aurobindo again in 1923. That trip decided my future.

It was an ordeal to come away to Pondicherry cutting through my loyalty to Shri Nayana and attachment to Shri Maharshi. But I was compelled from within.” (4-2-1951).

—‘Compelled from within’ indeed! So was Sri Aurobindo compelled from within cutting through his attachment to political activities and so was the Mother—compelled from within to surrender wholehearted at the feet of the Master instantaneously.

What was the secret and significance behind the Divine compulsion? In the words of Sastriar, “That Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are brought together for the work in which they are engaged, has a special significance in the scheme of providence. The Mother, coming as she does from the West, represents Activity and Dynamism which distinguish it; Sri Aurobindo stands for the ancient vedantic truth of the static, Immobile Purusha supporting all manifestation—the most peculiar conception, of the East”. (7-11-50)

And had Kapali Sastry too a special signifi-

cance in this scheme of Providence? Had he a specific appearance in this spiritual scenario?

Yes, one would positively say so.

What Sri Aurobindo gave to the world was only the intuitive key to unlock the secrets of the Vedas. To collect the immense treasures that lay therein was the task of someone who knew Sanskrit thoroughly well and who had gone through the traditional method of learning. Sastriar was the God-sent person most fitted for the job! Sanskrit was his forte and traditional learning was running through his veins from the days of his ancestors.

There was an additional qualification of Kapali Sastry. He was the illustrious disciple of Kavyakantha Vashistha Ganapati Muni who was a 'Luminary of the first magnitude on the spiritual firmanent of modern India.' Or rather he was 'Chinna Nayana' as he was affectionately and appreciatively called by Ramana Maharshi of Arunachala.

Thus he was well equipped to fight his adversaries on their own battleground.

Sri Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan who was destined to become India's second President, spearheaded the attack on Sri Aurobindo's theory. In the early twenties this 'eminent Indian of renowned scholarship' counselled, "hesitation in following the lead of Mr. Arbinda Ghose, however ingenious his point of view might be." This prompted the Sastriar to lift his mighty pen in defense of Sri Aurobindo's proposition.

Kapali Sastry is well aware of and indebted

to Sayanacharya's Herculean task, but nevertheless brings out the central weakness of his commentary quite convincingly. He terms it as "the defect of a representative obscurantism of the time, unprogressive and narrow, vast erudition developing 'an extraordinary poverty of sense' attached to the hymns of the Vedic Seers, enthroning in the heart of the Vedic Religion, the external cult and worship of Nature Powers and performance of ceremonial rites for material benefits and other worldly pleasures, a sublimated hedonistic doctrine before which refined ideals of an inner and higher life and spiritual knowledge have their facets disfigured or eclipsed and hidden in disgrace."

As far as Western orientalists are concerned, Kapali gives them their due stating that if the conclusions of their study based on the outer meaning of the hymns are consistent and legitimate then they would prove useful in deciding upon the place, time, conditions, natural character of the Vedic Rishis and the labours of modern scholars are rendered not in vain. But still those scholars who were totally relying on Sayana's commentary had 'their misconceptions partly due to temperamental unequipment. They were fanciful and fundamentally wrong in their startling assumptions and conjectural and hasty in their generalizations and conclusions.'

Sri Aurobindo marked out a fresh line of approach to the study of the Vedic hymns. 'Under uncommon circumstances he made his entry into the world of Vedic wisdom, perceived with the

discerning eye of light the revealing images of the Vedic Gods and Goddesses, chanced upon the hidden secrets of human speech as a living force and organic growth with the people of that original Epoch of the Veda, opened the doors behind which lay open the covert meaning of the Mantras of the Rik Samhita.'

According to Yaska, the author of the Nirukta, the Mantra called 'Brahman' revealed itself to the Rishis in Tapas, not in any other way. If (Mantra) Brahman the self-born came to the Rishis who were doing Tapas, before they became Rishis, in that lies the Rishihood of the Rishis.

The Rishi not only sees but hears the Mantra too. This seeing and hearing of the Rishis is not of the ordinary kind. The eye and ear of the Rishi are of an uncommon kind and so is the poetry manifested through them.

Thus it is quite clear that the Esoteric meaning of the Veda was neither an intellectual conception nor a poetical fantasy of Sri Aurobindo but the Mantra itself revealed to this modern Rishi of Pondicherry in Tapas and that he saw and heard the Mantra too.

To tell the truth there is no other way to know the meaning of the Vedas. In fact they are not to be read or learnt but to be lived and realised as such. That is why when Kapali read the first issue of *Arya*, he instantaneously recognized that Sri Aurobindo would not have written those words without experience.

T. V. Kapali Sastry was treading the same

path. Two decades of intensive Sadhana at the feet of the Mother and the keen and the active interest taken by Sri Aurobindo himself led Kapali to venture on the most stupendous work of his literary career—*Siddhanjana*...in his sixtieth year.

Sri Aurobindo asked Sastriar to write the commentary keeping close to his line of interpretation and using the clues he has provided to unveil the symbolic imagery for arriving at the inner meaning that is the secret of the Veda.

As Sri M. P. Pandit aptly puts it, “whether these clues of symbolism, albeit based on linguistic research, could yield results in a systematic manner, whether the results thus arrived at could stand the test of the scholar’s scrutiny and whether there was any support to these findings in the vast mass of the literature that grew around and flowed from the Vedas, were questions that naturally arose in the minds of earnest students and demanded a satisfying answer in the form of a regular exposition of the Hymns as done by earlier commentators. And it is precisely this desideratum that has been sought to be met by *Siddhanjana*.”

Siddhanjana is the magnum opus of T. V. Kapali Sastry. His life as well as his Sadhana found culmination in this monumental work. His literary and philosophical discernment blossomed full in this commentary. Here his mature style and life-long study go hand in hand to give him a rare confidence in unveiling the inner truth of the scripture.

Siddhanjana projects so much identity between

Sastriar's life and letters that the completion of the Rig Veda Bhashya virtually draws the curtain on his worldly life too.

*

*

*

Besides *Siddhanjana*—that monumental work on the Vedas, Kapali Sastry's most outstanding contribution is 'side lights on Tantras.'

Though, the Veda was the 'first love' for Kapali, he was not averse to Tantric influence. In fact he was a 'Tantric' through and through—'to his marrow he was Tantric.' Even before he met Nayana, Kapali knew and practised these austerities with considerable success. The prolonged Mantra Upasana in those early years stored up in him the reserve power of Vak. The surcharged Vak power went forth instantaneously and worked 'miracles.'

But soon he realised that mere occult powers without a spiritual basis cannot take one far—they do not go long enough. Moreover Tantra was not directly connected with the teaching in Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Nevertheless, once Kapali Sastry wrote on the Tantra he went to the very core of the matter.

His 'side-lights' on the Tantra were in fact 'search lights' which penetrated deeply into the ancient traditions of the Agamas and brought out its salient features.

Of all the ancient scriptures Tantra is possibly the most misunderstood and its shakti-cult even looked down upon as something despicable. Kapali

sastry was well aware of the fact that no human institution fashioned by human hands in time is known to have escaped the disease and decay inevitable with the wear of age and that the Tantric system has been no exception. He admits that certain elements featured in its rituals which are undoubtedly the outcome of the moral and spiritual degradation of those who took to the cult with their unregenerated nature fed by intemperance and sexual indulgence.

But in spite of these drawbacks and downfalls, Tantra stands erect among the ancient systems due to its inherent and inbuilt synthesis. Kapali Sastry points out that the Tantric synthesis even surpasses the supposedly grand synthesis of the Gita, because it is more comprehensive and in a sense more in consonance with the intention in life. While the Gita looks upon life as lever for rising upwards and shooting beyond it and not as a field to be worked upon and cherished as an enjoyable creation of the Divine Being, the Tantra asserts that nothing is to be rejected from what the supreme Shakti has created. After all the world is for bhoga of the Ishwar or the Ishwari and man at his highest, representing as he does an effective portion of His or Her must enjoy the bhoga conscious of his part as a vehicle or the centre of the Enjoyer.

Probably the most striking feature of the Tantra which is surely to attract the attention of the modern mind is its universal character. While the shaiva and Vaishnava Agamas continue and preserve the Vedic tradition of confining

their knowledge and application only to the four Varnas, with some restraint, the Shakta declares in a more liberal spirit that it is for all people irrespective of their Varna. This aspect is in conformity with the modern concept of equality. As Kapali aptly puts it, "It is the scripture of the common man."

There is yet another aspect of the Tantric system which is more akin to the modern thinking. It is its emphasis on collectivity rather than on individuality—a sort of 'spiritual socialism' if one is permitted to say so. While explaining the rationale of the third of the four padas of the Tantric system—Kriyapada—Kapali Sastry elucidates this point thoroughly.

The writers of Agamas had a great psychological insight as well as a sense of social commitment. They knew that 'human mind in mass is less attached to the abstract and the subtle and goes on to provide significant rituals and ceremonies by which it could gradually be drawn to the inner truth of things.'

They did not stop with the individual. They recognized that 'for all purposes man is but a member of the larger society around. It is indispensable to mould the general environment also on the same lines so that there could be an identity of aspiration, a mutually helpful and congenial intercourse between the individual and the collective. The ideal individual of the Tantric Yoga has a responsibility to others, less fortunate than himself, he is looked upon as a Siddha, a perfect indi-

vidual for the outpouring of the Shakti, he is in communion with.'

According to Kapali Sastry, the Tantra shashtra has done signal service in emphasizing that though all the Devatas are of the same divine origin, yet each has a special stress in its character, each is meant to actualise or to help actualise the particular potentiality of the Supreme in creation ...The Tantra shastra developed the means wherewith to commune with the God...They took over various Yogas, as they were, improved upon with their special knowledge of the occult worlds and applied these means for opening up the inner centres that—window upon the metaphysical and still higher regions—they did not stop with that alone. They developed another Sadhana—Mantra Sadhana—which has survived to this day as the most significant contribution of the Tantras to the spiritual heritage of mankind.

Though later Vedists, the Smritikaras have taken a somewhat anti-Tantra stance, Kapali has no doubt of the esteem in which the Tantriks hold Vedas. He emphatically states that the Tantra has assimilated the Vedic spirit and revived it in a modified form. Kapali gives examples after examples of the Vedic origin of the Tantra. He asserts that Gods of the Hindu religion are in fact Tantrik Gods—who in turn are really a continuation of the line of Gods in the Veda with necessary modification inevitable with the incidence of time on tradition.

The peculiarity of Tantra lies in assimilating

the basic ideas of Veda and converting them into new ideals imbibed with time spirit. Thus the original word, the Vak, the voice of creation which suggests the Eternal syllable of the Veda, OM—or rather AUM—develops in the courses of its manifestation into the seed—sounds of the Tantriks, bija-aksaras, which are charged with the principles of things. The development of this seed-sound theory into very minute details by the Tantriks, with an eye to its utility to their exploration in the occult spheres, has had a far-reaching consequence on the practice of mantra-sadhana for dealing with men and things, the elemental forces and beings of the supraphysical worlds. Actuated by a synthetic spirit to include every element of truth that matters and concerns the individual (Pindanda) and the universal (Brahmanda) they proceed from the subtle meaningful sound vibrations to their causal and to the great causal of all causals which issue from original Throb which in its native form is light.

The 'side lights on the Tantra' deals extensively with other aspects of Tantric thought and a system such as Devi Mahatmya (which includes Saptashati) Pratisthan of the Deity, triple Sadhana of the Devata, the Mantra and the Guru. 'Kapali Sastry's authentic and the matter of fact approach together with his vigorous style puts Tantra in its proper perspective and gives it due place in the spiritual heritage of mankind.

At the turn of the twentieth century two distinct and diametrically opposite forces are seen working side by side reminding one of the mythological combats between the Sura and Asura. The battles between the nations became 'world Wars' for the first time in human history and two such wars in the span of just twenty years was a crushing blow to the already feeble world order. The boon of atomic energy is slowly but surely turning into curse and in fashion of proverbial Bhasmasura the human race is inflicting a deadly blow upon itself and opening the floodgates of a new 'pralaya'.

The forces of Truth and Light are not so visible to the naked eye but they are right there for a minute observer to see. Four years before the outbreak of the first World War, Sri Aurobindo went to Pondicherry at the bidding of Divine Command to be joined later by The Mother.

The emergence of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on the spiritual horizon and their two-in-one collaboration marked a real and much needed break-through in the realm of Yogic Sadhana. Not only the long lost and forgotten Intuitive spirit of Vedic age was revived but new summits were also scaled. That is why though Sri Aurobindo's system is Vedantic at the base, we find his distinct contribution at the apex. True to the tradition, his realisations came first and the supporting material merely bore testimony in the Gita, the Upanishads and of course the Rig Veda.

In other words it was a new grand synthesis

consistent with the Time-spirit. It is Kapali's authoritative commentaries that enlighten the reader about its proud place in the spiritual heritage and cultural traditions of India.

Thus Sri Aurobindo and The Mother were ascending the same 'Satyagiri' and their aim was the same—to proceed from the Darkness to Light and from Death to Immortality.

And all the way round there were forces of Darkness and Death in the very real sense of the term. There was no other way for Divine forces but to assert themselves.

Or was it vice versa? Were the forces of Darkness and Death raising their ugly heads because the supramental force of Light was trying to get into the very fabrics of matter and establishing there? Was it in a sense 'reaction' rather than action?

Chronological order tells an interesting tale. It was 1910 when Sri Aurobindo first started practising Yoga and thereby invoking Divine Powers. And first World War broke out four years later. So one can convincingly infer that undivine forces of war and distraction were provoked by the emergence of Divine forces that were invoked by the sage of Pondicherry.

Whatever be the truth of the matter, the fact remains that Sri Aurobindo and The Mother gathered all the spiritual strength at their command to oppose and defeat the forces of Darkness and Death. Sri Aurobindo, speaking 'On himself' acknowledges that—inwardly he put his spiritual



Sastriar with family

force behind the Allies from the moment of Dunkirk.....This he did because he saw that behind Hitler and Nazism were dark Asuric forces and that their success would mean the enslavement of mankind to the tyranny of evil, and a set-back to course of evolution and especially to the spiritual evolution of mankind.

Though the true and complete story of Sri Aurobindo's occult ministry cannot as yet be told it is suffice to say that the fierce war between the Divine and undivine forces which began in the true mythological style from the beginning of this century is still on and Divine forces must assert themselves and be prepared for the final showdown.

Though we are too near to the events to grasp the true significance in their totality, 24th November 1916 and 29th February 1956 are the two landmarks in the annals of the spiritual history of mankind. 'The Delight consciousness of the overmind which Sri Krishna incarnated—Avatar—descended on 24th November into physical, rendering possible the descent of the supremind into matter.'

Twentyninth February signified that 'the manifestation of the supramental upon earth was no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.'

'With the descent, the flooded descent, of the Truth...consciousness on earth on the night of February 29th 1956, the declared objective of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to bring down on earth, attainable by anybody who strives for it was

accomplished. (M. P. Pandit—a talk at center Peace, Auroville, on 28th November 1973).

As The Mother in her New Year Message in 1956 has said:

“The greatest victories are the least noisy. The manifestation of a new world is not proclaimed by beat of drum”.

Yes, indeed! The new world is born and nobody has heard any beating of drum!

*

*

*

T. V. Kapali Sastry was among the first disciples to recognise the eternal oneness of The Master and The Mother. He told an interviewer soon after the Mahasamadhi of Sri Aurobindo—“Way back in 1927 when I had known and met Sri Aurobindo but had not known much about The Mother and when I had an occasion to write to him about her, he had a manuscript copy of the Four Powers of The Mother sent to me which was later on incorporated in the book—‘The Mother’ and provided me with a glimpse into the powers and personality of the Mother. It is impossible to get the grace and guidance of the Master without a fervid devotion to the Mother. Sri Aurobindo had not gone anywhere. He is more intensely and concretely present in the Mother...The Master and The Mother are not different and separate. The Mother is a part of Sri Aurobindo’s being. She is the manifested, dynamic part of his soul. And any one who has totally dedicated himself to the Sadhana of Sri Aurobindo would have known that

it is The Mother who had been acting not only as the executive head of the Ashram but also as the unfailing and ever watchful guide, drawing all the power and light from Sri Aurobindo and passing them on in hundreds of ways, all according to each one's need." (Sunday Times December 17, 1950)

And after the Mother's withdrawal we hear the echo of Kapali in Madav's writing—

"The Mother's present physical existence ceases. But her work continues in a radiant embodiment of which I have had unmistakable perception.

For 96 years, she has been Beacon of Light and Hope for humanity. She has laid the foundations of a new life for man, lit the flame of God in many. She has shown to the humblest the way to the Highest.

The sea of Love that The Mother is, swells into an ocean." (—M. P. Pandit—Service Letter No.12 I-12-73)

This is the Hour of God. So the ball is in everybody's court. To live for the Divine or not, that is the central question.

T. V. Kapali Sastry has a convincing answer for the question and there lies his relevance for the present Birth Centenary.

As early as in 1930 he noted in his diary, "I live for the Divine. This is central truth of Yoga." (6-7-1930)

In later years, taking a brief survey of Sri Aurobindo's system, he asserts that since it is

the Divine in his Omnipotence that has created this world and along with it what we call our problem, it is for the Divine to give us—solutions tooWhatever the means be that the Divine uses to build the inner life, to initiate the human being into the mysteries of the cosmic manifestation, to unfold the Great Plan and the Supreme Purpose, there is ordinarily a preliminary condition to be present on the human side. That is usually a readiness to give up the human for the Divine, which appears as a flaming force, aspiration for the Most High, or a firm will to unite with the Divine will and the Divine consciousness, or a life devoted exclusively to the Divine in a spirit of surrender. Through the instrumentation of any or some or all of these at once, though that is rare, the Divine assumes direct control of the Sadhana for the achievement of His purpose in human existence. (Collected works of T.V. Kapali Sastry—Volume II-Pages 25-26)

So to pay true homage to our beloved Sastriar on his birth centenary let us live for the Divine and let Divine take control of our life to fulfil His purpose.

KAPALI SASTRY AS A COUNSELLOR

PROF. H. L. AULUCK

(A senior professor in languages, Sri Auluck has wide interests. Nothing is outside the range of his scholarship.)

One of the weakest links in the Indian education is the complete lack of any counselling in our schools and colleges. Leave aside, the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur, Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur and Madras and the Central Universities at Benares, Aligarh and Bangalore and a few Public Schools, there is nobody to guide the students in their day to day personal difficulties. So the student's life is at the mercy of the drifting winds and whatever occupation comes to the lot of the students is considered by them as their luck and destiny. Many are thus just square pegs in round holes—complete misfits in life. Kapali Sastry's Letters to M. P. Pandit are now a public property and can be very useful for guiding the students in their twenties.

Like Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his son, like the letters of Keats, Shelley and Byron, like the letters of Chekhov and Tolstoy, like the letters to Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Nehru they have a tremendous potential for our education. Here are some of the gems of Kapali Sastry's wisdom.

SIN

Sin is nothing but weakness; it is a big falsehood, a huge joke, a cruel joke, of the Puranas. No man even the worst scoundrel among us goes back to animal state. Every soul is a portion of God; certain souls choose low births for certain experiences, to call them punishments for past wickedness given by God is a childish notion and a religious dogma taught by the priest craft and blindly accepted by the unthinking society; this is monstrous and stupid. The sin Idea is a cancer I repeat, a colossal sham, Madhav must learn to be more cheerful, let him not brood. God never punishes.

ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere is something essentially internal, occult, psychic and spiritual. It is not primarily physical or anything outer. That is why a spiritual man carrying his personal atmosphere about him can establish himself anywhere and make the place a centre of spiritual force which place can be helpful to those who are spiritually open and not to all. So even when a physical place is said to be a centre of spiritual atmosphere it is not essentially physical (oxygen, nitrogen, watery vapour); but it is physical, useful only to him who cares for it; but a spiritual aspirant shall not always depend on outer atmosphere. He must manage to establish his own personal (spiritual) atmosphere wherever he goes.

MORALITY

Morality is relative; there is no absolute rule.

Morality is not spirituality. There are no stereotyped moral rules for all men, under all conditions, at all times. Remember also: Responsibilities go with rights and interests are often hidden in duties.

EVOLUTION

If you believe in the principle of evolution, then you can see that the rational man has had at some stage of the Earth's evolution an infra-rational stage of these infra-rational brute elements, animal instincts, which though not always dominant, are to be found in the rational man as a heritage of the past. Similarly when the rational being in course of evolution gets at a supra-rational state the 'rational' element can as well remain, only as subordinate to the 'supra-rational' (which is certainly not irrational) even as the infra-rational is retained now by the rational being, subordinating it to the possible extent to moral force and mental control.

ON BLOSSOMING

Budding orator, blossom well, open to the light emanating the fragrance of the enchanting quality of the soul, as petal opens after petal, quietly without agitation, for the pride and joy and smile of those to whom you belong by your natural environment.

Don't say 'I am not this body but say' 'I am this body, not this body alone, but much more than this body.' So, see to the body first.

ON SUCCESS

Have a happy confidence that you will succeed; that is the right attitude in all endeavours; a happy confidence in your capacity including a controlled, unfading enthusiasm, a conquering fervour, without excitement.

Through successes and joys as well as failures and miseries, the Divine helps and guides the devoted soul—not through successes and joys only. The Divine gives its help not always in the way we dictate to the Divine. The Divine is more wise than the human child and knows what is ultimately best for the child.

ON DESIRE

No, it is not a crime; the desire to be loved and admired is no crime; it is natural and is indeed the parent generating the motive-force for ambition which also is no crime, but is natural for those in whom there is the fire, the will of the spirit within to express itself and dominate wherever possible.

COMMON SENSE

Common Sense is not a common commodity, it is something that is woven into the very texture of certain minds grown and growing robust by proper contacts, favourable opportunities and healthy environments.

RATIONALISM

How can I consider myself competent to judge men and women in this realm of highly

aesthetic and ultra-moral idealisms of free-thinkers (you may take it to mean no-thinkers!) singing their hallelujah to the beast in man—cupid—these fashionable youths are barren of true critical (discriminative) intelligence, not to talk of their bankruptcy in an intellectual and moral life of a creative type. Those who disapprove of their movements and unthinking activities they would treat as fossils who understand a great deal less than nothing, and either understand nothing or misunderstand everything about the mystic bliss of secret love, including its antecedents and accompaniments and consummation—wooing, courtship, abduction—no elopement, yes, romance, companionate marriage, love—marriage, registered marriage, and many other sublime and unheard of marriages or no-marriage in time to come.

SIMPLICITY

Simplicity is an expression of sincerity which is the fulcrum of the soul manifesting in nature, enthusiasm is the vital push which is the power of the spirit within,” while wisdom is the light of the soul which is a portion of the Divine Himself.

INDIAN HERITAGE

PROF. K. SWAMINATHAN

(Nationally known as the able editor of the ninetyfive volumes of Gandhiana, sponsored by the Govt. of India, Prof. Swaminathan has deep literary and spiritual interests. Widely regarded for his integrity, he is an elder who commands the love and respect of all sections of society.)

The message of Sri Kapali Sastriar is, like that of Ananda Coomaraswami, “a crucial call to India to remain Indian.” To remain Indian is to see and handle *vyavahāra* in the light of *paramārtha*, to accept one’s given time, place and circumstance and play one’s various roles in the world-drama, while remembering that one’s true being is in the one Awareness-Bliss. This way of life is symbolised by the lotus, which is rooted in the local slush and traffics with the universal sun. Such interplay of matter, mind and spirit makes the human heart blossom and transform the animal into a god.

For *Sivamādal*, for the *jīva* to become Siva, for the son to return to his source, the Father and be merged in Him, one has to exercise and enjoy the god-given freedom to create out of the given past a future perennially new and bright. To reconcile the practical with the aesthetic, goodness with beauty, the Tamils have evolved the sixfaced God, the rising Sun, un-ageing youth.

For Sri Aurobindo the keyword of Indian

culture is dharma, for the poet Bharati the key-word is *rasa*. For the Tamils, the human dharma of *anbu* (affection), and the felt experience of *inbu* (happiness) are the outer and inner side of every moment truly lived. This God who moulds the future with the power of *prema* is praised by foreign scholars like Zvelabil and Shulman. And it is this God whose modern *avatar*, according to Kavya-Kantha Ganapati Muni, is Maharshi Ramana. The advent of this Sage, who like Ramalinga Swami was a wholly home-grown fruit on the tree of Indian culture, confirms the claim of the ancient Tamil poets that India is most Indian in Tamil Nad where Siva reigns supreme.

Dates and places are not merely what they seem to the eye of reason. They are meeting points of time and Eternity. Geography and history are like canvas and painting for the Master Artist in whose hands we are not only pigments but fingers, if only we could sing with Landor, "Nature we love and next to Nature Art." The plot and purpose and movement of the world-drama are half-revealed and half-concealed in our myths and legends which manage to communicate to the multitudes the subtlest secrets of *sanatana dharma*.

What price is literacy when this poetry moves the masses not through printed words, but through tales told, through images and festivals in temples and rituals at home? The words of Annie Besant uttered as Congress President in 1917 still hold true: "Home Rule here is intertwined with religion. Women pray in temples, Sadhus and Sannyasis

preach and the ever-religious masses listen and respond.”

Through the ages our people have listened more to saints and singers than to soldiers and statesmen. In the conversation of our people the voice of poetry is still heard, enjoyment prevails over understanding, myths and mahatmas flourish, history becomes legend and legends create history. The heroes we worship are *devas*, not *asuras*; we do not falsify history, but illumine and interpret it aright, when we believe and proclaim that in this very century the Eternal Goodness worked with Gandhi's hands, walked with Vinoba's feet, looked through Ramana's eyes and thought with Sri Aurobindo's brain.

Who planned it that Ramalinga Swami, the fore-runner of Gandhi in *jīva kārunya*, should merge in the light he loved on Jan. 30, 1874 and that Sri Rama's faithful servant should obey his summons on Jan. 30, 1948, the precise *pushya bahula panchami* in which 101 years earlier Paramahansa Tyagaraja sang his final song?

Who planned it that in 1893 Vedanta should begin its *digvijaya* or world conquest by Gandhi going to Africa, Vivekananda to America, Annie Besant to India and Sri Aurobindo returning home?

Who planned it that Aug. 15, the birthday of Sri Aurobindo, the very date (in 1917) when Ramana uttered his seminal *sutras* on citizenship (*Sangha Vidya*, Chap. X of Ramana Gita) should be chosen and named by a British Viceroy as the day of India's independence?

Who planned it that a Bengali should come to Pondicherry, form with Vadalur and Arunachala a sacred triangle, find friends and followers like Subramania Bharati and Kapali Sastriar and expound with a seer's insight the mystical element in the *Tamil* language?

We have faith in the poetic truth that the Gods live for ever in our midst sporting with their devotees. Our Gods do not lie buried in books written long ago. Like the Ganga whose water is perennially renewed, or like this morning's sunshine, these manifestations of the divine are changeless and yet change the world.

When Gandhiji was twitted by Srinivasa Sastriar on the many modern notions he foisted on Sri Rama, the Mahatma's candid answer was: "My Rama is not Valmiki's Rama or Tulsidas's Rama. He is not even Dasaratha's Rama. He is *my own Rama*. When I was young I sowed him in my heart, and he has been growing there ever since". Yes, our gods are sown in our hearts and homes, our towns and villages, and grow there and in due season produce flowers called mahatmas who spread the fragrance of dharma and fruits called maharshis who sow again the seed of moksha. Browning asked, "In Vishnu land, what *avatar*?" We answer boldly: "*Here they are: Gandhi, Rama's servant; Sri Aurobindo, lover of Krishna; Sri Ramana, son of Siva*".

In a little book on the 108 Names of Sri Ramana, an attempt has been made to understand and explain the joy experienced by poets like

Kavyakantha and Viswanatha Swami when they identify the man Ramana with the God Muruga. Dharma springs from poetry, goodness from beauty, and when practised makes every life a poem. As Krishna Chaitanya says: “In Indian thought the world of art is not closed; it is in perpetual osmosis with the wide world of man’s responsibilities and ideals”.

The Ramana legacy is the Muruga legend, brought uptodate for daily use in our individual and social lives; as the Aurobindo legacy is the Krishna legend and the Gandhi legacy is the Rama legend.

The thief who stole the hunter’s daughter,
Unborn, immortal Muruga
Says, “Be speechless, still,” and I
Am pure Awareness, being All
And knowing nothing.

The God of youth and beauty heralds a golden age when the light of *paramārtha* suffuses and sanctifies the troubled waters of *vyavahāra*.

GOLD MINE OF THE VEDAS*

DR. RAJA RAMANNA

(Dr. Ramanna is Chairman of the Atomic Commission, a Sanskritist of note, whose interests in Music are original and creative. He embodies in himself the happy reconciliation between Science and Spirituality.)

I was at first not quite willing to accept the difficult task of saying anything of value to commemorate the birth centenary of Shri Kapali Sastry in spite of the kind and affectionate invitation from my old friend Shri Anjaneyulu. For one thing, I had not read the works of Shri Kapali Sastry and besides I was developing a fear that if I speak any more on Indian philosophy or Sanskrit I would just be found out.

Three things changed my mind. First, was the insistence of Shri Anjaneyulu, the second the revelation of the inspiring works of the great Savant Kapali Sastry—Shri Anjaneyulu was good enough to send me his complete works which I read for the first time and have not quite recovered from its intellectual impact. Lastly and certainly the least, the feeling of challenge from some of the comments on an article I wrote in the “Hindu” entitled ‘Logic, Shankara and Subramanya Iyer’, which the paper,

* Sri Kapali Sastriar Memorial Lecture delivered on July 27, 1985 at Madras.

however, published under the title 'Advaita & Science' for reasons best known to themselves.

I will dispense with the last motivation by just saying that the criticisms were by routine people who have a routine view of complex things. On re-reading my paper many times, I feel that even if there was nothing new or strange in it, there was in it atleast a new exposition of old things. This is of some significance especially because very few Indians know about their own ancient works, however glorious they be, and those who do, are more interested in interpreting it according to some Sampradaya one of them being imitating outmoded western ideas. Shri Kapali Sastry's best essays are inspired in indignation by such writings.

On reading some of the works of Shri Kapali Sastry specially on the Vedas, I found it elevating not only for its erudition and scholarship but for his refreshing freedom of interpretation. These essays cannot but be master-pieces being written by one who is rare today—a person of deep learning and understanding and who happened to be in the enlightened presence of the Saint Aurobindo himself.

That the Veda is not just the outpourings of a primitive people, whatever its poetic value, is argued with such clarity and details that it is difficult to believe that anybody could question its spiritual and philosophical content however much it is obscured by time. The philosophy it contains is not for obtaining a M.A. degree in our Universities

nor is it like a treatise by Kant or Hegel or even Shankara for that matter, but philosophy it is.

On this occasion, I would like to share my thoughts on an old problem having some relation to the writings of Kapali Sastry. In fact, I started writing about it even before Shri Anjaneyulu sent me the complete works. I found to my great happiness that I was indeed performing an 'arati' to his thoughts without knowing it.

I have chosen the subject of Intuition, asking whether it is possible for a human being to make statements of profound value without a process of deduction conscious or unconscious or is all Intuition merely the reflection of some unconscious integration process of the existing knowledge which can then lead to new knowledge and new symmetries. For convenience we will call the first of these as Intuition of the first kind and the latter of the second kind. It is the second kind that is acceptable to scientists, but actual facts do indicate that Intuition of the first type also exists. Since I cannot make such statements without giving examples, I proceed to do this:

It can be recalled from our studies in school how things which even if they look obvious are still given a formal proof. This is due to the work of Euclid and is a good example for training people to understand the meaning of a formal proof. For example, when two lines cross each other the opposite angles are equal. The fact seems too obvious as to ask for a proof, specially when the human brain

is best conditioned to appreciate Euclidean geometry. But mathematicians say, however trivial the matter, a proof based on more elementary postulates is necessary even if it is to make them only feel comfortable. Proof of more complicated things by mathematical analysis certainly ensures that within the frame work of the postulates, mistakes do not creep in and unnecessary restrictions do not hamper growth. It may be recalled that the postulate that parallel lines meet at infinity, restricted geometry for centuries. It was only systematic mathematical studies which broke these shackles and the very useful branches known as non-euclidean geometry, of great significance in physics, came into existence.

The history of mathematics is replete with examples where the statement was first made and the proof came much later. There seems to be some mystery in all this. Early Indian mathematicians gave only the result and never the proof. It is possible that in these works the author perhaps had a proof or a demonstration but did not think it important to give details. European mathematics is also full of instances where the statement came first and the proof filled in later. How did the statements flash to the mathematician? It may just be that the brain being conditioned by intense periods of mathematical activity permits a flash of important new theorems (Intuition of the second kind). The case I now bring to your attention is nearer home and more exciting and suggests other possibilities. As you all know,

Srinivas Ramanujan had the gift, nay the genius of conjecturing difficult theorems. It is only now proofs are being found for his conjectures, and what is more curious is that these proofs contain mathematics which just had not come into existence in Ramanujan's time. It cannot just be Intuition of the second kind. It is closer to Intuition in a mystic sense. In a recent lecture by the distinguished mathematician, Prof. K. G. Ramanathan¹ on the work of Ramanujan, it was pointed out that Ramanujan conjectured very complicated and beautiful formulae, some of which he proved himself, some were proved by others and many are yet to be proven. His "lost" papers discovered a few years ago in a box left by the late Prof. Watson (why he kept them so long without publication is mysterious) is full of very important mathematical results some of which have received proofs only recently. What is important is that these proofs require new developments in mathematics, developments of which Ramanujan knew nothing and came into existence long after his death. Here is an example of such a result chosen at random from the paper of Prof. Ramanathan:

$$\frac{1}{1+} \frac{q+q^2}{1+} \frac{q^2+q^4}{1+} \frac{q^3+q^6}{1+} \dots = \prod_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{(1-q^{2n+1})}{(1-q^{3(2n+1)})}$$

The left hand side is a continued fraction and the right hand side is a product.

¹ Homi Bhabha Medal Lecture—1984 by Prof. K. G. Ramanathan.

A curious example of thinking “ahead of time” is the sloka from Indian logic. It is by Viswanatha¹ (early 17th century—Nyaya Vaisesika School). The 121st and 122nd slokas state:

परत्वं चापरत्वं च दिविघ परिकीर्तितम्
 दैशिक कातिकं चापि मूर्त एव तु दैशिकम्
 परत्वं मूर्तसंयोगभूयस्त्व ज्ञानतो भवेत्
 अपरत्वं तदल्पत्वबुद्धि कयादितीरितम्

“Distance and nearness are described as being of two kinds, viz. spatial as also temporal. The spatial kind abides only in limited things. Distance arises from a notion of preponderance of the conjunction of limited things and nearness is said to arise from a notion of its meagreness.

The commentator of this sloka writes:

“Distance and nearness, which are the extraordinary cause of the convention that a thing is far or near, are being described: Distance etc. The spatial, etc.—Spatial distance arises from the notion that a thing is removed by a larger measure of conjunction with limited things. Similarly nearness arises from the notion of a small measure of it. Here the ablative case-ending is required to indicate the starting point. As, Prayaga (Allahabad) is farther from Pataliputra (Patna) than Kashi (Benares), and Prayaga is nearer to Pataliputra than Kurukshetra”.

¹ ‘Bhasa-Pariccheda’ by Shri Viswanatha Trans: Swami Madhavananda Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almore.

The distinguished translator-cum-commentator is obviously confused by the purport of the statement and yet had he known set theory he would have found the meaning of the sloka to be quite straight forward. Set theory is no more than a little 100 years, but the sloka was written during the early 17th century. It does not necessarily mean set theory was known to the Navya Nyaya logicians but the basic idea is clearly expressed and the most generalised definition of length is given. This may not be Intuition but we have to appreciate the fact that there are many modes of thought, however remote they be from each other, can lead to the same conclusion.

I have given two examples of correct ideas derived in circumstances very different from the accepted methods i.e. by deduction. Now I wish to propose that if this is possible in a highly organised discipline such as mathematics or logic, it must be more true of philosophy. It is after I had written these words, the works of Kapali Sastry became known to me and the first few pages of the great essay 'Lights on the Veda' were enough to say I was on the right lines.

The importance of the essay of Shri Kapali Sastry entitled 'Lights on the Veda' can hardly be over-estimated. When speaking of the Vedas, particularly the Rig Veda we are speaking of something composed atleast nearly 4500 years ago. For those who are students of literature the consequences of aging is obvious when we realise how remote is the language of Chaucer compared to modern

English. Chaucer is only a few hundred years old. That people can still understand the Vedas atleast obscurely if not clearly, itself brings out the greatness and universality of these ancient thinkers. The difficulties of interpreting the Vedas arise not only from its antiquity but obscurity is built-in for very specific reasons. Shri Kapali Sastry points out that though externally the Vedas use a language of ritual and sacrifice, it is essentially a cover for expressing great spiritual thoughts. In fact, in Tamil,¹ the Vedas are known as “Marai” which means “hidden”. The language of sacrifice and ritual is used for expressing something deeper but what the historical facts were which led them to such a system is difficult to say. There are indeed many ways of expressing deep thoughts. Music is one but not definitive, Mythology is another.

We take note that unbelievable care was taken by the Rishis to see that it was handed down from generation to generation by very special methods to avoid distortion or interpolation. Sanskrit is an extremely phonetic language built on highly scientific lines. It is a language built on roots which themselves have esoteric meaning and it is possible by introducing various orderings to develop a system to ensure that the purity of the writings is handed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. No other writings in the world have come

¹ Tamil Translation of Rig Veda by Shri M. R. Jambunathan, ‘Radha Nivas’, 375, First Road, Khar, Bombay-400 052.

down to us in such purity. If the ancient writers took all these precautions, why then, should they have exerted themselves to this extent merely for a text book on ritual.

Another problem in understanding the true meaning of the Vedas is the complications created by the various commentators over the centuries. It is surprising that no works of any commentators have come down to us until we reach the time of Sayana which is as late as the 13th/14th century. Sayana, a great scholar, whose interpretations of the Vedas are fundamental to any student of the Vedas clearly says he is not interested in its spiritual contents but admits it does exist. He was more interested in ritual. Nevertheless, in a most scholarly and academic work he has brought out the methods of interpreting the Veda through phonetics, grammar and etymology. His contributions which are of immense value to all Vedic scholars, seem to have suggested to western writers to conclude that because Sayana concentrates on the ritual side, all Vedas must therefore be connected with only ritual and sacrifice. This seems to have been echoed by Indian scholars in recent times as was the fashion particularly in the early part of this century. Shri Kapali Sastry tears to pieces this approach in a way which is most devastating not because his writings are rough, but on the contrary because they are so full of logic and written in a style of great literary merit.

We are concerned here with the fact that the Vedas assume deep spiritual meaning and are

composed through a form of trained 'Intuition'. Like music, where extemporisation is perfected by years of training Intuition in the same way can be developed into an instinct. Kapali Sastry¹ himself writes of this and I quote from three different places:

"The Vedic age is not at all presumed to be an age of Reason and intellectual development and what we call exact sciences as we know them but it was undoubtedly one of Intuition, an age of the mystics who had developed certain lines of self-development and culture of the Spirit and had their own technique of the Yogic art, and methodised their system of building the inner life."

"Besides, it is a mistaken conception that spiritual experience, intuitive insight, occult knowledge, inspiration and similar non-rational acquisitions of some of the so-called primitive races are either fancied and therefore not valid, or if valid they belong to a later period when man advanced in general knowledge of himself and his environment and lived in a better civilised state with the comparative comforts of life that economic improvement brings. But some of the ancient pre-historic peoples have had profound knowledge of Nature in certain spheres which our learned critic himself admits in these words. 'The most ancient fancies sometimes startle us by

¹ Complete works of Shri Kapali Sastry—Vol. I.

their strikingly modern character, for insight does not depend upon modernity’.”

“Supposing that our present civilisation practically perishes for the most part, as a consequence of some catastrophe in Nature, or by a catalysm brought about by Nature’s stupendous work in the monstrous brain of man producing a reasonable number of atom bombs would it be right for future generations to deny altogether the actual fact of the scientific culture, the intellectual advancement and general progress of civilisation of our times?”.

As mentioned somewhere in the complete works, Sri Aurobindo asks the interesting question: had Indian culture disappeared like the Egyptian and Greek cultures and European scholars had to translate the following sentence: “Laxmi and Saraswati refuse to dwell under one roof”, what would have been their reaction. Since they had no Puranic culture they would probably have convinced the world that it means “Dawn and Night are two irreconcilable chemical substances”, whereas we know that it obviously means “wealth and learning seldom go together”.

These are the pitfalls of modern Vedic interpretation.

Let us take the Vedic hymn which says “Night and Dawn of auspicious form, I invoke to seat them on the sacred grass at this our solemn worship (sacrifice)”.

नमेषासा सुपेशसास्तनूं यत उप हूवये
इदं नो बर्हिमासदे

We now quote Kapali Sastry's interpretation of this sloka which is most enlightening. His essays are full of such instances.

“In the mystic discipline of these ancient sages, there are alternations of Day and Night both of which are equally important for the perfect fulfilment of the purpose of sacrifice. It must be noted that the Day and Night are symbols in the esoteric system of the Vedic sages, of the alternations of the Divine and human consciousness in us. The Night of our ordinary consciousness, says Sri Aurobindo, holds and prepares all that the Dawn brings out into conscious being. Day also in another way represents broad open light, the light of Consciousness in which the worlds and planes and their Powers are beheld severally and in toto, while Night represents a concentration and self-absorption in the consciousness, an intensity of self-gathering in what we may call the immobile, static existence in which there is nothing else to be seen, but in which the all is absorbed; the Truths, the planes and their Powers and the Gods and all beings and things lie latent and hidden and seem to be non-existent as it were. Such alternation in the consciousness was a necessity in the mystic discipline of the Rishis for the perfection towards Immortality that was their aim. Hence Day and Night *nakta-usas*, of distinct auspicious forms, *supesasa*, are called upon to be present. Though this seems to be a

personification of day and night as deities, the idea is clear in the mind of the Rishi that both the states must be made possible for him in his endeavour. The Day-consciousness shall not dazzle him and make him forgetful of the Night in whose womb lies the Day. The Significance of invoking both together which are apparently of different hues, white and black, and can never co-exist lies in the fact that in the Vedic Yoga both are equally important and be made familiar to the being of the Rishi in whom both the forms, the twin sisters, Day and Night—can abide. It is this twin aspect of the Consciousness with necessary variation in its connotation that is the origin and support of the dictum of the Upanishad that both “Knowledge and Ignorance” must be known together. “He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality”. We may note in passing that this concept of Day and Night is expressed figuratively in the famous passage of the Gita that what is day to the Wise is night to the common man and vice versa. The Isha Upanishad text quoted above clearly says with reference to the knowledge and Ignorance and Birth and non-birth, to be known together, that we “have heard it from the Wise ones of yore”. Who else could these Wise ones be but the mystic of the Vedic Wisdom, dhirah?

This, then, is the significance of the Rishi', invocation to the Day and the Night to be present at the sacrifice and take their places in the seat made ready for the advent of the Gods to the sacrificial Hall in the inner Mansion of the larger and wider being of the Rishi''

Is it not unfortunate that the Vedas which is a gold mine of thought is hardly ever read. The old learned keep it to themselves because it is a tradition, the younger ones know nothing of it. The non-Hindus do not take it seriously because it is considered sacred by the Hindus. It is only some European scholars who tried to make something of it since they wanted to find their roots in the great-Indo-Aryan civilization of yore, but would give it no spiritual credit because it did not come under the Christian fold.

Thus the oldest literary works of man lies in a museum unappreciated and not understood. Should we not, Indians irrespective of our caste, creed or religion do something about it? Is it not existing to do research in this vast and virgin field instead of writing about English literature—a crowded, nay over-crowded field leaving restricted scope for originality? I would even suggest T. V. quizzes on the Veda on what they really mean. For this we cannot find a more suitable place than Madras known as it was at one time for its scholarship in Sanskrit, History and Mathematics. Should we not revive this scholarship that we have lost in a wave of self-destructive caste politics?

SOMA: MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING

SANTOSH KRINSKY

(Santosh Krinsky is the founder of Lotus Light Publications (Wilmot) in U.S.A. specialising in the spiritual texts of India. He is a seeker of the New Consciousness as projected by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He is also a catalyst in the consumer movement in America).

The concept of Soma has allured seekers for many thousands of years. The pressing and drinking of the Soma constitutes one of the major activities of the Rig Veda. What has always created difficulty for the seeker, however, is that the Veda consistently veiled the true meaning of the Rishis behind symbols which could hold both an outer, exoteric meaning and an inner, esoteric or mystical significance. Only those who were prepared inwardly for the mystical experience could grasp the true meaning of the Veda; all others stumbled against a wall of symbols, each one believing that his interpretation was the true secret of the Veda.

No symbol has created more confusion over the centuries than that of Soma and the Soma rite. The vital nature of man is inevitably attracted to the excitement and exhilaration of ecstatic states of being which the Soma concept holds out as its promise. According to various dominant strains in his nature, man is drawn to various practices to try to invoke these inner states of ecstasy. Each type

has created a school of practice and has led to the current confused rendering of the Soma concept in the West, where Soma has been likened to “magic mushrooms” or “psychedelic drugs” in recent years, in addition to the renderings which lead the practitioner into worlds of sexual or alcoholic fantasies in search of the intoxication of the “Soma wine.” Because of the real dangers to the novice seeker in these vital realms, teachers have been reluctant to introduce this concept to their disciples, and rules have been formulated to avoid all types of vital stimulation. On the other side, entire schools of practice have grown up which include the ritual use of intoxicants; ritual sexual practices; drugs; herbal mysticism and other activities which constitute the vital adventurist response to the search for the true meaning of Soma. The basic division between these two lines of approach, conservative and adventuresome, have been traditionally broken down into the divisions of Vedanta, the path of meditation and inner purification and quietude; and tantra, the path of Shakti, energy, and spiritual adventure.

Nowadays, in the West, these traditional divisions are no longer working, however. Greater interaction between the inwardly drawn practices of Vedanta with the natural outward personality of the Western culture have led to a challenging of the purely quietistic lines of yoga as being insufficient. On the one side, this has led to the characteristic Western approach of attempting

to blend the meditative with the active personalities, and has given us manifold methods of "realisation" based on the outer symbol of the Soma. On the other side, this has also led to the sublime synthesis of Vedantic and Tantric lines of development which we can recognise in the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo, who represents the solution to the traditional dichotomy through inner understanding of the significance behind the symbols rather than the more common approach of trying to blend the outer activities of both lines without piercing the veil of symbols.

It is necessary to recognise the importance of the concept of Soma underlying all these attempts. The Veda stresses the invocation of Soma as absolutely necessary to the seeker who hopes to attain true realisation. Eventually it is therefore necessary to go behind the veil to the secret meaning of Soma. In the meantime, it makes little sense to condemn out of hand the activities of those who are engaged in the search for Soma in outward activities or physical manifestations. The scriptures warn repeatedly that no door is too lowly to admit entrance to the divine realisation for the sincere seeker. In reality all this searching is simply the alluring power of the intoxicating Soma acting upon the psychological natures of all human types and temperaments. The more refined and inward the temperament, the closer it may come to the unlocking of the secret. This seeking of humanity takes many different forms and the direction, the

motivation is the important factor, more important than the individual actions or the stumblings along the way. In fact, such stumblings are inevitable given the use by the Vedic rishis themselves of outward symbols to simultaneously veil and reveal the psychological truth of the Soma.

Based on the outward symbolism of the Vedic rishis, Soma has been considered by some to be the intoxicating beverage distilled from a particular plant, leading some to believe it is a form of vine, which, when the juice of which is imbibed, leads to a state of exhilaration. According to this school of thought, the state of bacchic intoxication and forgetfulness of self is the true state resulting from the invocation of Soma.

Another parallel along this line is the recent Western interpretation, fostered by such modern philosophers and thinkers as Aldous Huxley and Alan Watts, of Soma as a form of plant which has the power to open new vistas of vision or take one behind the screen of the material world into other realms of consciousness, making Soma into a type of hallucinogenic substance, such as the "magic mushroom" or "mescaline/peyote" of the American Indian shamans.

This parallel is viewed from the other side by the teaching that each "food" has its psychological dimension; that is, that each plant or food contains vibrations which can and do affect the texture of the consciousness and that certain dietary regulations, when followed, will assist the seeker in refinement of the consciousness and the consequent



Sri Vasistha Ganapathi Muni.

ability to go deeper into meditation or contemplation. This vedantic regulation (e.g. garlic or onions should be avoided as tamasic; spicy foods should be avoided as rajasic) to aid the seeker in the development of the contemplative life has its correlation in the teachings of the medicine men, shamans and mystical herbalists from basically all cultures of the world that there are certain herbs or plants which help in meditation, opening of inner states, developing quietude and extending health and life capabilities. We find statements in Zen meditation that tea is to be used as an aid to concentration and meditation; which directly parallels the vedantic injunction against the use of tea because of its stimulant properties. The science of Ayurveda details the usage of hundreds of herbs for the development of health and longevity, and also includes numerous references to herbs used to quiet the mind, improve memory and concentration and aid in achieving emotional and mental equilibrium.

Another line of understanding begins to look at the Soma symbolically, but takes the symbol only a short distance below the surface. This line looks at the ecstatic energy produced by the Soma and tries to create it, taking the natural energies present in the vital being of man as the starting point. This line has led to the left-hand path of the tantras, where sexual practices are used as a means for "realisation". In fact, it is man's attempt to take the most intense vital experiences in the body and extend them beyond their limits, to activate

the Soma energy. In this line of understanding, the Soma is interpreted to be the sexual, seminal fluids. And again, the issue is dealt with from opposite sides by the different major paths. The vedantic injunction is to restrain the sexual energies entirely and direct them inwards and upwards. The throwing out of the sexual energies, the development of the intensity of sexual energy is seen as a hindrance to the development of spirituality and as a misleading glimmer. The tantra has two lines of major development; one of which stresses the inward realisation, the harnessing of the Kundalini energy and the mystical union of Kundalini with the Divine consciousness through the re-directing of the sexual dynamic inward and upward so that the powerful forces of the sexual vitality become the means of realisation of the divine consciousness; while the other side makes use of outer sexual rites and activities as ostensible occasions for overstepping the bounds of the vital consciousness and reaching beyond the limits of vital/physical ecstasy to burst through the door to the other side. Again we see various lines of understanding and lines of practice based on an outer understanding of the symbols. And again, we can see in all these lines the underlying aspiration of man for a realisation exceeding the bounds of the ordinary, material life and consciousness.

The point here is not that one particular line of teaching is "right" or, "wrong". It is simply to understand, in an historical perspective, the differences in human temperament as applied to the

same goal, the achievement of the consciousness of oneness and the invocation of the true meaning of Soma into the consciousness. As we can see, man's eternal seeking has led to the development of a number of different, even contradictory, schools of practice. We can see here the lines of the intoxicant, the mystic herbalist or medicine man, the tantric and the vedantist, all striving for that energy, that fulfilment, which will lead to the Soma experience and the Divine realisation.

We cannot simply condemn as misguided those who have wandered on one or more of these various paths seeking realisation. A clue, a symbol is shown. Each strives to realise according to his level of understanding and ability. Eventually, if the flame of aspiration is strong, the obscurities and deviations are burned away and a deeper understanding will result. And those who remain bound within the confines of one of these limited paths are those who are meant to work out a specific formula and not meant to go further in this lifetime. It is likely that where such strong contradiction appears, that each extreme has missed some aspect of the reality that the other extreme is attempting in its own way to address. Truth can no longer be defined in a linear fashion; that is, "I am right; you are wrong." We can begin to recognise that truth is global, seen by each individual from a different angle and therefore having a different form. The secret is to be able to see the truth with this global perspective that has the

ability to see the differences in approach and integrate their apparent contradictions into an overall harmony. Sri Aurobindo has stated in the *Life Divine* that nature's most extreme contradictions are the spur towards a greater and more puissant synthesis and integration at the next level of evolution.

“The greater that apparent disorder of the materials offered or the apparent disparateness, even to irreconcilable opposition, of the elements that have to be utilised, the stronger is the spur, and it drives towards a more subtle and puissant order than can normally be the result of a less difficult endeavour.” (*Life Divine*, page 4, U.S. edition, 1949)

It is therefore appropriate for us to view this varied seeking towards the meaning of Soma as signifying something of the deepest importance and hidden therefore deeply behind a thick curtain of symbolism by the rishis who had the experience and knowledge of the Soma-consciousness. The diversity of approach shows us that all of mankind is being readied for an evolutionary leap in consciousness, and that every energy, every motivating force in man is being tested, extended and prepared for the change which will occur on every level. No aspect of man's life can remain unchanged and, therefore, every aspect is being worked out in relation to the inner aspiration and drive of the spiritual consciousness.

In order to truly find the hidden meaning, it is necessary to leave behind us our pre-conceived

notions of what the true significance of Soma is. Neither the Vedantic or the Tantric formulas, nor the Western conceptions, will aid us in finding out the hidden intention. We must gather up the courage to leave behind the doctrines of our own cherished spiritual teachings and confront this diversity and contradiction unflinchingly to recognise the deeper intentions of the spiritual energy at work behind the veil.

In Savitri, Sri Aurobindo has hinted at these deeper, hidden movements of the universal consciousness, movements that go far beyond our daily thoughts and cares and interaction with the material world:

“A maenad of the cycles of desire
Around a light she must not dare to touch,
Hastening towards a far-off unknown goal
Earth followed the endless journey of the
[Sun.”

What this far-off, unknown goal may be, and where the endless journey of the Sun may be leading us, is akin to the secret intention in the world, and the eternal aspiration of mankind as evidenced in the varied paths and teachings. The real meaning of Soma, when it is realised in the consciousness, will be found to bring humanity into contact with its secret soul and destiny in the mystical journey of mankind to its still hidden goal.

Our first approach to understanding Soma would normally start with the Vedic rishis themselves and their own symbolic utterances;

however, inasmuch as the symbolic language of the rishis is so foreign to our normal perceptions and thought processes, it may be better to address this issue later and first of all find a thread which contains a bridge between our normal methods of perception and those of the Vedic rishis. This bridge can be seen in the Upanishads, which express the spiritual principles in mental terms we can begin to deal with, while at the same time, keeping a close kinship with the Vedic symbology.

A certain passage in the Taittiriya Upanishad expounds on the principle of the bliss or delight of existence, the Soma, "In the beginning all this Universe was Non-Existent and Unmanifest, from which this manifest Existence was born. Itself created itself; none other created it. Therefore they say of it the well and beautifully made. Lo, this that is well and beautifully made, verily it is no other than the delight behind existence. When he has got him this delight, then it is that this creation becomes a thing of bliss; for who could labour to draw in the breath or who could have strength to breathe it out, if there were not that Bliss in the heaven of his heart, the ether within his being? It is He that is the fountain of bliss; for when the Spirit that is within us finds the Invisible, Bodiless, Undefinable and Unhoused Eternal his refuge and firm foundation, then he has passed beyond the reach of Fear." (Taittiriya Upanishad, Brahmananda Valli, Chapter 7, translated by Sri Aurobindo)

The Upanishad clearly indicates that this

Bliss, the Soma, is the delight behind existence, the foundation upon which life and energy and mentality are able to exist, for “who could labour to draw in the breath, who could have strength to breathe it out, if there were not that Bliss in the heaven of his heart, the ether within his being?” Here we are shown the underlying reality that Soma permeates all life, all energy, all mentality, to some degree, hidden or open. Without the activity of Soma, without that Bliss in the heaven of the heart, there could be no creation or life in this universe. This passage illumines the Vedic hint that Soma is found in the essence of the plants, and that an epithet of Soma is “vanaspati”, lord of plants”. Sri Kapali Sastry discusses this issue briefly in his exposition on a hymn of Medhatithi Kanwa, R. V. 1.13, verse 11, translated by Sri Aurobindo as follows: “O Lord of the Earth’s growths, thou art God and to the Gods offer this our oblation. May there be tangible knowledge to the giver.” Sri Kapali Sastry’s explanation of this Rik is helpful: “Then there is the invocation to Soma. He is addressed as the Lord of Plants, of the Earth’s growths, vanaspati...The significance of Soma, the lord of delight in things, being called upon to offer the oblation lies in the fact that the outflowing of rasa, the principle of delight in the human being, is absolutely essential in all worship to the Gods... (Collected Works of T. V. Kapali Sastry, Vol. I pg. 106).

Soma remains all the time secretly involved in the entire manifestation of life and consciousness;

the hidden support of everything; while at the same time, the awakening into conscious activity of Soma is the required means for realisation of the Vedic yoga. This concept of a dual role, the hidden foundational role which makes all life and activity possible; and a consciously developed evolution in the heart and mind of the seeker as an active principle is explained by the passage of the Upanishad already quoted, "When he has got him this delight, then it is that this creation becomes a thing of bliss." This thought reveals that although Soma is constantly active and silently supports all effort, our consciousness of separation does not allow us to partake of that Bliss actively, although in reality we could not exist without its flowing secretly in our inner being. Once the consciousness awakens to the activity of this flow of inner bliss, then all creation becomes blissful. The difference is simply one of awareness and attunement. The same action can be seen as either blissful or painful; the energy behind it is the same. It is the interpretation of the witness, participant consciousness that determines the response. Sri Aurobindo discusses this problem in *The Life Divine* as follows:

"...since in our depths we ourselves are that One, since in the reality of our being we are the indivisible All-Consciousness and therefore the inalienable All-Bliss, the disposition of our sensational experience in the three vibrations of pain, pleasure and indifference can only be a superficial arrangement created by that limited part of ourselves which is

uppermost in our waking consciousness. Behind there must be something in us,—much vaster, profounder, truer than the superficial consciousness,—which takes delight impartially in all experiences; it is that delight which secretly supports the superficial mental being and enables it to persevere through all labours, sufferings and ordeals in the agitated movement of the Becoming.” (Life Divine, U.S. edition, page 97).

With this background, we can begin to see the direction of the Vedic Rishis in their symbology and experiential form of communication. Soma is constantly involved in the energy working in the world, it is the essence within the growths of the earth, it is the substratum of delight that permits all things to exist and manifest. However, the human instrument is not conscious of this substratum and therefore experiences pleasure, pain and indifference as the reaction to events and circumstances. Through various psychological disciplines and mystical attunement of the soul, it is possible to bring the human consciousness into harmony with the universal consciousness and invoke the active, conscious movement of Soma in the being. This is a state of inspiration, of delight, of seeming intoxication brought about by the direct action of Soma in the being in all its purity and in undiluted measure.

Inasmuch as the opening of the consciousness to the flowing of Soma requires a change from the normal, daily active consciousness, the Vedic

Rishis have set forth a series of psychological movements and signposts to aid the seeker and guide rightly down the path. We see the requirement of invoking the God Agni, symbolically the fire of aspiration and the flame of devotion, as the first-pre-requisite. Once this aspiration is awakened, it becomes necessary to kindle by it, the powers of the being at all levels. Indra and the Maruts are invoked, the powers of mind and mentalised vital energy. These forces must be induced to aid the seeker in the striving for perfection. The imbibing of Soma, understood now in its purely psychological sense, is required to properly attune the mind and the vital powers to the work at hand. There must be a conscious attunement to the hidden delight.

Once Soma is understood in this sense, we can then see the inevitability of the symbols used to describe Soma and its action. The wine of intoxication is the feeling of overwhelming delight the seeker experiences when the contact is made with that world-delight. One loses contact with the outer world and experiences the uplifting of the mentality and vitality to a level not normally experienced in everyday life. There could be no other way to describe this to the outer consciousness than as a form of intoxication. There is no normal state comparable to the experience, so it is no wonder that people have consistently stumbled against this description. And that is why the Rishis have made it plain that only the Veda-knower can understand the Veda; that all others are only reading words;

“That they were secret symbols, images meant to reveal the truth which they protected but only to the initiated, to the knower, to the seer, Vamadeva himself tells us in the most plain and emphatic language in the last verse of this very hymn. ‘All these are secret words that I have uttered to thee who knowest, O Agni, O Disposer, words of leading, words of seer-knowledge that express their meaning to the seer...’” (Secret of the Veda, p. 202)

The outward interpretations are all based on a partial reading of the outward symbology of the Veda. The Rishis have warned us that such a reading will be incomplete and misleading. In order to discover the true inner sense of the Veda, it is necessary to trace the steps of the Rishis, acquire the experience of the inward consciousness to which the symbols point, and the use Vedic symbols as guiding lights and signposts along the way; that is, to develop the inner life and experience within oneself and thereby confirm the symbols anew. Even a short distance along the way, we can begin to experience things which make the symbols come to life, which confirm the truth behind the symbols and the difficulties in interpretation of the Vedic symbology begin to fade. Sri Aurobindo has pointed out in the Secret of the Veda that “In fact, once the central idea is grasped and the mentality of the Vedic rishis and the principle of their symbolism are understood, no incongruity and no disorder remain.” (Secret of the Veda, p. 178)

The true experience of the Soma lies in the realm of consciousness, not in the seeking of plants, wine or hallucinogenic herbs. As we develop the practice of yoga within ourselves, we begin to get glimpses of that hidden delight, we feel sudden bursts of inspiration. At this point in time, it can be helpful to hear the words of the Rishis and their descriptions of experience, to understand their methods as described in the hymns on how to distill the Soma into the consciousness. Each symbol will come alive and illumine a psychological force or movement or obstacle that needs to be faced and worked out.

We have gained a slight glimpse of the meaning of the Soma concept. Sri Aurobindo has summarized "It is the divine delight hidden in all existence which once manifest supports all life's crowning activities and is the force that finally immortalises the mortal, the amrtam, ambrosia of the gods." It must be left for another time to work out the details of the symbology and chart the part towards invocation of the Soma into the consciousness on a constant basis.

VEDIC KNOWLEDGE IN MODERN CONTEXT

DR. R. L. KASHYAP

*(Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering
at the Purdue University in Indiana (U.S.A.),
Dr. Kashyap is a deep lover of the Indian heritage.
He leads many Indian studies at the campus.)*

I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Veda in Sanskrit means knowledge in all forms. However, the plural Vedas ordinarily refer to the ancient sacred books of the Hindus which are dated not later than 3000 B.C. For most intellectual Indians having some acquaintance with Hindu philosophy, all the basic spiritual knowledge is contained in the books called Upanishads which are considered an extension of the Vedas. The questions that are posed and answered in this essay are: what are the various books in the collection called Vedas in the broad sense of the word? Does this collection have a core? If so, what is it? What is the connection between this core and other ancient books of knowledge like Upanishads? What is the connection between this core and the ancient texts of yoga and Tantra? What is the relevance of these texts to modern spiritual seekers? Does this core of the Vedas indicate new parts of spiritual knowledge? What does this core of the Vedas say on the ontological questions of the one and many, man and gods, this world and other

worlds? Are there other modes of knowledge besides intellectual knowledge, which is the type of knowledge made familiar to most of us because of advances made by western science and technology?

The above questions are of interest to serious students of Indian culture whether they are Hindus or not. The primary reason why one should read the core of the Vedas, the so-called Rigveda Samhita, is that it provides answers to most of the above questions. However, a casual reader of the Rigveda Samhita finds only hymns to various Devas or gods and the answers to the various questions raised above are not clear. The meaning of the hymns of Rigveda will be transparent only if we remember, while studying the texts, the comments provided by Sri Aurobindo and Sri Kapali Sastry. Both Sri Aurobindo and Sri Kapali Sastry suggest that Vedas have at least two interpretations, the surface or the external interpretation and the internal or esoteric or symbolic interpretation. The external interpretation has been the basis for most of the Standard Sanskrit commentaries like that of the great medieval scholar Sri Sayanacharya or the English translations and commentaries authored by western indologists and their Indian followers. Obviously one cannot get the internal meaning of the Vedas from these texts. The translations and commentaries on the Vedas by Sri Aurobindo and Sri Kapali Sastry and their disciples like Sri M. P. Pandit give us a map to understand the esoteric meaning. Only by understand-

ing the esoteric sense of the Vedas we can get the ability to find in them the answers to the various questions posed earlier.

Three objections are often raised about parallel interpretations of the Vedas. The first objection is that in most of the current languages of today, one cannot envision several parallel interpretations even in small poems. Consequently, it is difficult to envision parallel interpretations in a composition of more than 10,000 stanzas. Furthermore, can we envision such parallel interpretations in Sanskrit? The answer to this objection is simple. Sanskrit is not like any other language, ancient or modern. Experts who have been working in the area of knowledge representation and computational linguistics have been amazed [5] at the precision in Sanskrit which is not available in other languages. Several examples are available in classical Sanskrit of stanzas having several different interpretations. For instance, a stanza of 4 lines is given in [6] which can be interpreted as a hymn to Shiva, a hymn to vishnu and as the decimal representation of the number pi (ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter) using the standard code for converting integers to the Sanskrit alphabet. Finally, it is not as if a reader is asked to blindly believe in the esoteric interpretation of the Veda. Sri Kapali Sastry has written a detailed commentary on every verse of every hymn in the first eighth part of the Rig Veda (128 hymns) pointing out the esoteric interpretation and the limitations of the external or surface

interpretation of the Veda. To illustrate the limitations of the external interpretation, take the word Soma. Its usual modern interpretation is that it is an intoxicating herb. Such an interpretation of Soma is not consistent with the following Rik (X.85.3) “when they crush the herb, one thinks that he has drank the Soma; but no one ever tastes him whom the Brahmins know to be Soma.” There are many similar Riks in the ninth book of Rig Veda. Obviously, Soma is not a herb, even though it can be symbolized in rituals by a herb.

The second objection is why would the authors of the Vedas hide their real meaning? The answer to this question is straightforward. Nobody wants to hide the truth, but not all persons have the same aptitude for understanding the text. As one repeats the hymns and meditates upon them, they gradually reveal their full meaning. An entity is evaluated by individuals in light of their past experiences. This is best illustrated in one of the stories told by the great teacher, Sri Ramakrishna [13]. “A rich man gave a precious diamond to his servant and asked him to have it appraised by several different persons having different amounts of capital. The servant went first to the seller of eggplants who said that the diamond was not worth more than nine sèers (a weight measure of about a pound) of eggplant. Next, the servant went to a cloth merchant whose capital is substantially more than that of the eggplant seller. He said that the diamond is a good thing and offered to pay nine hundred rupees for it. Next,

the servant went to a diamond jeweller who offered one hundred thousand rupees for the same diamond. One offers a price according to one's capital. Take a living incarnation of God. Some take him for an ordinary man, some for a holy man, and only a handful recognize him as an incarnation."

The third objection to parallel interpretations of the Vedas is that whereas they have been around for more than five thousand years, why is it only Sri Aurobindo has recognized its esoteric meaning? Even the famous commentator Sri Sayanacharya does not deny the spiritual meaning of Veda. Sri Sayanacharya says that he wrote the commentary to elucidate the meaning of the hymns when they are used in rituals. Secondly, there do exist Sanskrit commentaries which uphold the spiritual interpretation. The most famous of these is due to the great teacher of dualist Vedanta, Sri Madhwacharya, who predates Sri Sayanacharya. Sri Madhwacharya affirms that the Vedas have three parallel interpretations, namely interpretation for use in a ritual, interpretation as hymns addressed to the cosmic powers or gods, and finally, interpretation as hymns addressed to the Supreme One. The sixteenth century South Indian saint Sri Raghawendra Swami, a spiritual descendent of Sri Madhwacharya, wrote a detailed gloss on the first 40 Suktas of the Rig Veda Samhita, pointing out all the three interpretations.

II THE VEDIC BOOKS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION

The core of the Vedas is the Samhita consist-

ing of four collections of hymns. There are three types of hymns, namely Rik, a metrical composition used in recitation to invoke the gods; Saman, a metrical composition expressed in a musical form; and Yajus, a nonmetrical composition giving details of rituals. Correspondingly there are four collections of hymns, namely Rig Veda Samhita, consisting of Riks; Yajur Veda Samhita consisting of Yajus, Sama Veda Samhita, consisting of Saman; and Atharva Veda Samhita, consisting of miscellaneous hymns. In addition, the Yajur Veda Samhita has two versions labelled Shukla (white) and Krishna (black). All these hymns are revelations to various sages who rearranged them into metered hymns. The arrangement of the four collections is traditionally attributed to the sage Vyasa. Vyasa in Sanskrit means editor. There is considerable overlap in the four Samhitas. Most of the Sama Veda Samhita and more than one half of the Yajur Veda Samhita is a part of the Rig Veda Samhita. Thus, the core of the Samhitas is the Rig Veda Samhita. It has about one thousand hymns arranged into ten books called Mandalas. Each hymn has several verses and the total number of verses is about ten thousand. Each hymn also has the name of Rishi or Rishis to whom the contents were revealed and the name of Devatas or gods to whom the hymn is addressed. Sri Aurobindo has stated that there is no chronological order in the hymns, i.e., it is not correct to say that the tenth Mandala or book belongs to a period much later than the first Mandala:

All the Vedas have been preserved by oral transmission. Even after more than five thousand years, the text of the Veda chanted today is almost identical to that chanted five thousand years ago. There are several methods of chanting which taken together indicate any error in recitation and would also help in locating the error. This method of information preservation is very reminiscent of the modern methods of transmission of information employing error detecting and error correcting codes. The oldest hand-written manuscript of the Veda written on palm leaves is not more than seven hundred years old. The first printed version of the Rig Veda Samhita, published in 1864, is due to the great orientalist Max Muller. This publication was made possible by a grant from the East India Company. Reference I gives the details of the standard text of the Rig Veda Samhita compiled from all the available manuscripts and it includes the commentary by Sri Sayanacharya.

In the Veda Samhita period, the dominant mode of knowledge was intuition. The hymns record intuitive experiences of various sages. Hence, there is some repetition. When a hymn is intoned, the power or god invoked by that hymn reveals the necessary experience. Here meaning and experience are identical. The mode of intellectual knowledge developed later.

The creative age of the Samhita also came to an inevitable end. Different aspects of the truths contained in the Samhita were re-expressed in

different ways in different books such as Brahmanas, Upanishads and the Tantras. Immediately after the Samhita age, we have the ritualistic age, when some of the truths and experiences in the Samhita were expressed in the form of rituals. The idea is that if the rituals are appropriately performed, the performer gets the appropriate experience, the experience originally obtained by the sage who formulated the hymn, just by invoking the hymn. The Vedic books which describe the principles of rituals and their associated activities like the altar construction, etc., are called Brahmanas. All the Vedas have Brahmanas texts associated with them. For example, Rig Veda has the Aitereya Brahmana, the white Yajur Veda has Shatapatha Brahmana, the black Yajur Veda has Taittereya Brahmana, the Sama Veda has Tandya Brahmana, Chandogya Brahmana and Samavi-dhana Brahmana and finally the Atharva Veda has the Gopatha Brahmana.

Performing a ritual is obviously much easier than developing intuition. Thus, in the course of time, a doctrine which states that rituals subsume the Samhita and Vedas evolved. The proponents of this doctrine are known as Mimamsakas. Clearly this doctrine is denounced by Bhagavan Sri Krishna in Srimad Bhagavad Geeta who calls them as "Veda-Vada-Rata." Still the power of the ritualist schools can be gathered from the fact that the fourteenth century commentator Sri Sayanacharya wrote a commentary on all the Vedas to uphold the ritualist doctrine, even though he says in the intro-

duction that he does not deny the existence of other interpretations of the Veda such as the spiritual. It is this commentary with its elaborate word-to-word meanings and illustrative stories from the Puranas that has provided the basis of commentaries on the Vedas by western indologists and their Indian followers.

It should not be construed that every verse and hymn of a Brahmana text is geared to the ritual [16]. In some parts of Brahmanas there are discussions about the ultimate Reality which are intellectual or philosophical in the modern sense of the word. Often the latter parts of some of the Brahmanas, called Aranyakas, contain a mixture of ritualistic doctrine and intellectual discussion. Two well-known Aranyakas are the Aitereya Aranyaka associated with Aitereya Brahmana and the Taittereya Aranyaka associated with the Taittereya Brahmana.

Finally we have the Vedic texts called Upanishads. Upanishads contain spiritual experiences couched in the language of the intellect and hence these are easily understandable to those with an intellectual bent of mind. Because of the prestige associated with the name Upanishad, many relatively new works dealing with spiritual topics are also called as Upanishads. But, according to the great commentator Sri Shankaracharya, the important Upanishads are those which are part of a Samhita or a Brahmana. The Isha Upanishad is in the Shukla Yajur Veda Samhita. Kena Upanishad is in the Tandya or Jaimini Brahmana of

Sama Veda, Katha Upanishad in Khatak Brahmana, whose complete text is not available. Chandogya, Aitereya, Taittereya Upanishads are from Aranyakas bearing the corresponding names, Shvetashwathara Upanishad is from the Taittereya Brahmana. Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad is from the Shatapatha Brahmana and finally the Prashna, Mundaka and Mandukya Upanishads are from Atharva Veda. These eleven Upanishads are often referred to as the major Upanishads and they have been commented upon by Sri Shankaracharya.

During an age which is much later than that of the Upanishads, there was an attempt to popularize the occult truths behind the Veda in the form of stories. These books are the Puranas, associated with the name Vyasa. Anyone familiar with the popularization of truths of physical and biological sciences is well acquainted with the perils associated with the final product. The subtle truths of the Veda are often twisted beyond all recognition in the Puranas. Unless a serious attempt is made to understand the symbols behind the stories, very warped and mistaken notions are obtained about Rishis, gods and spiritual life. This topic is treated at some length in the next section.

The prestige associated with the word Veda is so great that texts dealing with specialized topics like health and medicine, sculpture, mathematics, etc., are called as Vedangas or limbs of Vedas. The text dealing with health is thus called the Ayurveda, another dealing with the altar construction is Silpa Sutras, etc. The Vedangas are

particularly important in delineating the intellectual condition of the people of the Vedic times. A careful reading of these texts should dispel the myth that Vedic Indians spent their life performing rituals to attain heaven and that they had no interest in worldly things. The truth is that the Vedic Indians believed in a balanced development of all the faculties in man at physical, vital, mental and spiritual levels. They had a vision of several planes of existence, each plane having its own complexity and this world inhabited by us as only a small part of the entire scheme. They envisioned the mountain of knowledge consisting of various peaks, each peak corresponding to a different branch of knowledge. Spiritual life was envisioned as an eternal journey going from one peak to another (Rig Veda: I.22).

III. WHO ARE THE GODS

A deep understanding of spirituality, interpreted in a broad sense, is not possible without a good understanding of the nature and role of gods mentioned in the Rig Veda. Before proceeding further, it is important to distinguish between the capitalized word God and gods in the plural. God refers to the supreme principle which is the substratum of all existence. On the other hand, "gods" refers to different aspects, powers and personalities of the supreme God. To avoid confusion, it may be better to replace the word God by another word like the Divine. Even the word Brahman is a source of confusion since it refers to the Supreme

One in some contexts and also to a god representing a creative aspect of the Supreme One. It is important to remember, especially in the Vedas, that when a reference is made to the Supreme One, there is no attempt at denying the different manifestations of the One. Both the One and the manifestations are real.

In addition to the Rig Veda Samhita and other Samhitas, gods are mentioned in most of the Indian scriptures such as Brahmanas, Upanishads, Puranas, tantrik texts like Mahanirvana Tantra and the epics, namely Ramayana and Mahabharata. Puranas and epics are popularizations of subtle truths about our existence and, as discussed earlier, may involve misrepresentations, albeit unintentional. The protagonists of the Puranas may balk at this statement, but it is impossible to represent a subtle truth in the form of a story without introducing distortions. After all, the word “subtle” precisely implies that its meaning is not easily grasped. Moreover, Puranas were composed later than the Vedas. Therefore, the temptation to interpret the Vedic truths on the basis of Puranic stories should be controlled. The great Vedic Commentator Sri Sayanacharya interprets the Vedas in light of the Puranas and the resulting inconsistencies are well brought out by Sri Kapali Sastry and Sri Aurobindo. Consequently, there is no need to repeat them here. We need only follow the esoteric interpretation of the Vedas to get a clear picture of the gods. Some of the inconsistencies and symbolisms

in the Puranic stories are discussed later in this essay.

Most of us are aware of the immense complexity of the life around us, even in its external forms. Unraveling the mystery of the external world is, after all, the goal of physical sciences. A complete analysis of all our experiences, physical, vital and mental, is impossible for most of us. Faced with this formidable situation, it is tempting to say that there is no order in this world and all the occurrences are the results of “pure chance”, whatever that word may mean. Many agnostic philosophers like Bertrand Russell have written extensively their reasons for not believing in the existence of a God who controls this universe. However, a close analysis of their writings reveals that these authors are only demolishing the limited conceptions of God in their mind. Again, the explanation of some theists that after death all go to a place called heaven or hell is also very simplistic. Another school of thought develops the idea that the whole world is a creation of our minds. Of course, in Hindu philosophy no one believes in the concept of each individual having his or her own mind. The existence of a cosmic mind is a basic tenet of Hindu Philosophy, and each individual is a channel connecting the universal cosmic mind to the individual. It is appropriate to remember the tale of five blind men who reported touching a creature which was as huge as the trunk of a big tree, as slithery as a snake, as hard and smooth like granite, and as broad as a

huge leaf. It is easy to dismiss their reports as meaningless unless one has seen an elephant whose different parts of the body correspond to the diverse description given by the blind men. In other words, the purpose of logic is to see whether a new finding is consistent with our earlier experiences or hypothesis. Logic cannot suggest a new hypothesis. The only avenue for obtaining an entirely new hypothesis in spiritual life is by intuition or revelation. For instance, Sri Aurobindo did not arrive at his astounding conception of the Divine only by logical methods. After having obtained the broad picture by means of revelation, he showed in his "The Life Divine" the connection between the various, often conflicting conceptions of God or Divine discussed in scriptures, just as a person who has seen an elephant can make sense out of strange reports given by blind men.

The Vedic sages believed that the manifestation is like a many-tiered hill which can be adequately described by seven planes of existence. One may wonder why the number seven is chosen. There are other descriptions involving different numbers of planes and they are useful in appropriate places. We will give two such instances. To the question "How many gods are there?" posed in the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, the sage Yajnavalkya replies with the number thirty-three crores and systematically prunes the number to thirty three thousand, three, two and one. Another related conversation between the sage Ashtavakra and Vandi reported in the Mahabharata has been

commented upon by Sri Kapali Sastry in his essay "The Mystic Quartette." The seven planes of existence are the lower triple worlds, namely the world of matter, the world of life or vital and the world of mind; the higher triple worlds of the world of existence, world of knowledge, and the world of bliss; and finally the world linking the lower three to the upper three, namely the world of Mahas or Vijnana. Vijnana is often mistranslated as intellect. The power presiding over each plane is a Deva or god. Thus, a god is a distinct power and personality of the Supreme. It is worthwhile reiterating that these worlds are not the physical worlds which can be reached by physical means. These worlds are in reality different states of consciousness. A human being who is conscious of only matter is at that time living in the world of matter. When his consciousness is dwelling on desires, feelings, emotions, etc., then he is living in the vital world. When he is immersed in thought, then he is in the mental plane or world. The god Agni presides over the world of matter, the god Vayu presides over the vital world, and the god Indra over the mental world. Most human beings are conscious of only the three lower levels of existence.

The meaning of the gods is not exhausted by their descriptions as rulers of different planes. Let us take the God Agni. Agni, of course, in the physical sense stands for the principle of fire. But even in the first hymn of Rig Veda the god Agni is described as a herald, a priest and as one who leads all other gods to the worshipper. Western acade-

mics have been wont to dismiss these epithets as typical exaggerations conferred on an anthropomorphic conception of the god Agni. The classical commentator Sri Sayanacharya explains these epithets in terms of Puranic stories which are often contradictory. Sri Aurobindo and Sri Kapali Sastry explain that the god Agni in the esoteric sense stands for the principle of aspiration in man to achieve higher things than his present state. Progress is not possible without aspiration. Hence, only if Agni is active, can he bring in the other gods or powers, i.e., the other powers can manifest in man. Thus, at the start of Rig Veda Samhita the sages describe spiritual progress as a journey (adhvara) from one peak of the multi-tiered hill to another. If we are at a peak, we get a much better view of the road to be traversed than if we are near the base of a hill. This conception is clearly very modern, but it is a paraphrase of a part of 22 hymn of the Rig Veda Samhita.

Many scholars of the Vedas make the mistake of measuring the degree of importance of a god by the number of hymns addressed to the god. Such an approach is fallacious. Most of the hymns are addressed to Agni because aspiration is the most important element in spiritual practice. One should distinguish between a path and the goal. The goal is the consciousness of the Supreme in all its manifestations. The Rigveda itself says that the god Vishnu is in the highest tier or plane and self-realized sages have their consciousness enveloped in him "like a ray connected to heaven." Yet the number

of hymns dedicated to Vishnu in the Rigveda is very few, less than half a dozen.

The next question is the relationship between gods in Puranas and the Vedic gods. As mentioned earlier, Puranas are popularizations of subtle truths of the Veda in a gross form. As a result, the picture of gods given in Puranas can be highly misleading if the symbolism in the stories is ignored. Fortunately, names of personages occurring in Puranas offer clues to the symbolism involved. Secondly, words used in the Vedas have developed a meaning in classical Sanskrit quite different from its intended meaning in the Vedas. As Sri Aurobindo points out words in the Vedas had a plasticity in their meaning which was lost in the course of millenia. Consider the Sanskrit word “go”. In classical Sanskrit it stands for the animal cow. However, as noted by many persons including Sri Sayanacharya and the lexicographer Yaska, “go” in Vedas means both Light and the animal cow. The double meaning of the word “go” is the reason behind the puranic story that the cow contains and gives birth to all devas or gods, the word “deva” meaning “a ray of light.” Similarly, the word “ashwa” stands for both the horse and purified vital energy. Thus, when the worshipper prays to the gods for “go” and “ashwa”, he is seeking both enlightenment and vital energy, not just cows and horses.

Let us consider in some detail two popular Puranic stories which describe the “immoral” behaviour of gods and explain the symbolism. A

famous story in the Ramayana states that Ahalya, the wife of the sage Gautama, was seduced by the god Indra and consequently she was cursed by the sage to become a stone. Later, when Sri Rama touched that stone, she regained her original form and lived happily forever. First of all, a god is said to be born in man if the corresponding power is manifest in him. Indra is the god of the mental plane, consisting of all thoughts including those termed immoral. Evil and good are obverse and reverse of the same coin. Indra seducing Ahalya may thus be interpreted as Ahalya allowing the presence of immoral thoughts in her being and even encouraging them. The consequence is that her condition became more and more tamasic. Ordinarily, Tamas is denoted by inertia. Hence, her condition is symbolized by a stone. The condition can change only when a personality of pure Sattwic nature like Sri Rama can overwhelm her tamasic nature and replace it with Sattawa.

Another story, also in Ramayana is that the god Vayu made advances to a princess. On rejecting the advances, she was cursed to become a hunchback. Vayu is the symbol of all vital energies. Every god makes an advance to every human being, i.e., the god wants to bestow his powers on man. But, if the man disregards the offer, then, of course, the god withdraws. Withdrawal of Vayu from a man means withdrawal of the major part of vital energies from him. This naturally makes the person weak and bent, a hunchback.

As Sri Aurobindo says, gods are not personifi-

cations of qualities or powers, but incarnations or emanations of conscious forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they can help man and show him the way to a divine consciousness and immortal life.

In the Vedas Aditi is the mother of all the gods. We will quote Sri Aurobindo to illustrate the connection between the reality and myth regarding Aditi. "...originally the pure consciousness of infinite existence one and self-luminous; she is the Light that is Mother of all things. As the infinite she gives birth to Daksha, the discriminating and distributing Thought of the divine Mind, and is herself born to Daksha as the cosmic infinite, the mystic Cow whose udders feed all the worlds... In the cosmos Aditi is the undivided finite unity of things, free from duality, Advaya and has Diti the separative dualizing consciousness for the obverse side of her cosmic creation—her sister and rival wife in the later myth."

IV. THE UPANISHADS

It is customary to find in many books on Indian philosophy the statement that the authors of the Upanishads opposed the Vedas on the grounds of ritualism and developed alternate intellectual theories detailed in the Upanishads. There are several inconsistencies in this statement. First of all, Upanishads are not philosophic texts involving metaphysical speculations. They are basically texts describing Darshana, the variety of spiritual experiences of various sages. There are

no speculations in these texts. Secondly, the sages of the Upanishads did not reject the Veda Samhitas as such; they only claim that they have either discovered new truths fully compatible with the Samhitas or they are amplifications and generalizations of some of the seed ideas in the Rig Veda. To substantiate their viewpoints, they often quote some mantras of the Rig Veda. One of the great contributions of Sri Kapali Sastry is to delineate the precise connection between the Rig Veda and the Upanishads.

The Upanishads, besides delineating various spiritual experiences, also give a few hints on Sadhana, i.e., paths of spiritual realization. These methods of Sadhana are called Vidyas. The Upanishad does not give much detail about the Vidyas because such details cannot be conveyed in print. Typically, a teacher transmits these truths to the students, often in silence. There are more than a dozen Vidyas mentioned in the Upanishads. Sri Kapali Sastry's book [Vol. 1 of his collected works] is the only one, as far as the author is aware, to discuss these Vidyas in some detail. Madhu Vidya of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and the Vaishwanara Vidya of the Chandogya Upanishad are taken up here to relate their connection to appropriate passages in the Rig Veda Samhita.

The Madhu Vidya or the doctrine of mystic honey is found in the 5th chapter of the second book of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad [14] which is itself part of the Shatapatha Brahmana. Often this Upanishad is quoted [14] by some monists to



The Maharishi.

demonstrate this world to be an “utter illusion” and that it is irrelevant to the attainment of the highest spiritual experience called as Nirguna Brahman. Such passages upholding the “lofty illusionism” are found in the Maitreyi Brahmana of the same Upanishad which precedes the Madhu Vidya chapter. Madhu Vidya provides the required corrective and teaches us that the “diversity in creation is the manifestation of a secret delight, that all things, however heterogeneous and warring they may appear, are held together by a secret harmony effected in them by the hidden creative self delight of the Supreme who is the effulgent self, Immortal.” The Upanishad states “This earth is honey for all beings and all beings are honey for this earth—and he who is in this earth the effulgent, immortal Purusha and he who is within one’s being, in the body, the effulgent, immortal Purusha are indeed the same—He who is this Self, this Immortal, this Brahman, this All.” It gives fourteen illustrations to reinforce the above statement. It further adds that “this Self does not merely represent the basic principle of Madhu, the Bliss that abides in the heart of things but he is the Master of all things and beings and holds together all beings, all gods, all worlds, all selves and all lives.” Next the Upanishad quotes three verses of the Rig Veda Samhita (I.116,12; I.117.22, VI.47.18) stating that the doctrine of mystic Honey given here is not new, but was already revealed to the sages of the Rig Veda, specifically Dadhyan Atharvan by Ashwins, the twin powers. Sri Sayanacharya explains these

verses by using a legend in the Shatapata Brahmana involving the god Indra, Dadhyan, son of Atharvan, and the twin powers Ashwins. Sri Kapali Sastry explains that these verses make much more sense if they are interpreted along esoteric lines, using the clues supplied by the meanings of names of personages like Dadhyan Atharvan. The two parts of the word Dadhyan, dadhi and anc, give us the meaning that “it is a distinct lustrous power moving in the Yield of Light fixed in the intellectual mind.” Dadhyan, like the Atharvan or the Angirasa, is either a deified sage or humanized god. Ashwins are an inseparable dual godhead who always appear together. The Ashwins embody the twin forces of harmony and beauty, health and joy. Their own archetypal interdependence and harmony in the cosmic functioning brings to bear on us the necessity of realizing the interdependence of things and beings, the balance and harmony that is preserved by a great unifying principle referred to as the Madhu. It is the Delight of Being in all existence which explains and unfolds the necessity of diverse forms in the manifest existence and gives them their value. The particular chapter in the Upanishad closes with the following Rig Vedic verse due to the Sage Bharadwaja (VI.47.18) “To every form he has remained the counterform: that is his Form for us to face and see. Indra by his creative conscious powers (Maya powers) moves on endowed with many forms; for yoked are his thousand steeds.”

The next example is from the Vaishwanara Vidya of the Chandogya Upanishad [15] and its

connection to the Vaishwanara Agni mentioned in numerous hymns of the Rig Veda. Even though all Sadhanas of the Upanishads lead to the attainment of Brahmic realization, their starting points, their approaches, and the results experienced on the way to realization may differ. Sadhanas may differ from one another in their emphasis on different aspects of Brahman. The Vaishvanara Vidya mentioned in the 5th book of Chandogya begins with the question “what do you worship as the Atman” posed by the teacher, the king Aswapathy Kaikeya to eager students who approached him for the elucidation of the supreme realization. The teacher shows the limitations of various answers and teaches them about the Universal person, Vaishwanara, who is adored as “In all worlds, in all beings, in all selves, he eats the food.” The teacher exhorts the students in the art of living in accord with the truths of Vaishwanara, the universal person. He enjoins them “not to eat the food and live as if the Vaishwanara Atman were something separate, but to live—and eat for living—with the knowledge of Him as the One Fire who lives aglow in all creatures.” Such a person lives also for other souls, for other beings around, for the rest of the whole universe. His living is a source of joy and power to all living beings at all levels. He radiates wisdom and life-giving strength. The food he takes is an offering to the Universal Fire. This is the real meaning of the Fire ritual. The text says that whosoever performs the Fire ritual without knowing its meaning is wasting his efforts like

pouring his offering on ashes after removing the burning charcoal. As mentioned earlier, the Vaishwanara Vidya directly draws its inspiration from the numerous hymns on the Vaishwanara Agni in the Rig Veda. Sri Kapali Sastry gives a detailed discussion on this topic. We will content ourselves by giving references to some of the relevant hymns: Rig Veda, X.88; I.59; I.98.1; III.3.2.; III.3.4.; III.26.7.

V. VEDAS AND THE TANTRA

An important chapter in the spiritual history of India is the development of a line of spiritual discipline called Tantra. These Tantra Shastras are usually dated in the first millennium after Christ. Traditionally it is the scripture of the common man, open to all persons, without any restrictions of caste or scholarship. Many students of Indian culture believe that it is appropriate to call the religion of the modern Hindus as Tantric rather than Puranic. Tantra in Sanskrit has many meanings. As Sri Kapali Sastry points out, the relevant meaning of the word Tantra is “to act.” Thus ritual—ritual is an act—is a characteristic common to all the Tantrik disciplines. The connection between the Veda and Tantra will be discussed.

It is not uncommon to find in some books on the history of India a statement that Tantra Shastra developed as a rebellion against the Vedas since the latter was theoretically accessible only to members of the two higher castes. The latter statement

is not even loosely true since the Chandogya Upanishad indicates that the Vedas were taught to any student with sincere aspiration regardless of caste. Even otherwise, Tantra Shastra holds the Vedas in high regard and quotations from the Rig Veda are used in Tantra Shastra to support its approach. While the Upanishads represent an attempt at recovering the jnana or knowledge portions of the Vedas, the Brahmanas represent an attempt at reinforcing the ritual aspect of the Vedas, the Tantra Shastra represents an attempt at preserving and expanding the esoteric or the occult part of the Veda. A quotation from Sri Aurobindo is very appropriate: "The mental images of the Vedic gods in the mantras of Rig Veda (were replaced) by mental forms of the two great deities, Vishnu and Shiva, and their Shaktis and by corresponding physical images which are made the basis both for external worship and for the Mantras of inward adoration and meditation, while the psychic and spiritual experience which the inner sense of the Vedic hymns expresses finally disappeared into the psycho-spiritual experience of the Puranic and Tantrik religion and yoga."

First let us consider the gods in the Tantra and the gods in the Vedas. There is almost a one-to-one correspondence between the gods in the two scriptures, not only in the outward description of their powers, but also in their spiritual import. In the Tantra, as in the Vedas, we find the recognition of one Supreme Deity as the highest along with the simultaneous adoration of a number of other deities.

The Tantric gods, like the Vedic gods, have a twofold aspect; in their external aspects they are the powers of physical nature like rain, wind, etc. But, in their more important esoteric aspects, they represent psychological and psychic movements. For example, Agni of the Veda continues in the Tantra as Kumara, the child of the lord Shiva. In Veda, Agni is in the forefront of gods, their guide and messenger. In the Tantra, Kumara is the commander-in-chief of the gods and is looked up to for his immense store of knowledge and wisdom by the seers of later times. The role of Indra in the Veda is taken over in Tantra by Rudra who brooks no obstacle. The Sun, the highest God of the Veda, is addressed in the Tantra as Vishnu, a name used in the Veda itself. The role of the Aditi of the Veda is represented by the Supreme Shakti, called as Uma, Gowri, etc. It is true that there are new gods in the Tantra, but the prominent gods of the Vedas retain their supremacy under different names and forms.

The Tantra, like the Veda, places a high emphasis on the Mantra. A mantra is not a mere letter or collection of letters with some meaning. "It is the sound-body of a Power charged with the intense vibrations of the spiritual personality of the creator or seer of the Mantra. When a mantra is uttered under proper conditions, it is not the feeble voice of the reciter that goes forth to evoke the response of the gods to whom it is addressed, but the flame of tapasya (askesis) and realization that is lying coiled up in the body of that utterance. The

Tantra, following the Veda, has formulated some seed-letters, Bijakshara, which the seeker uses as the Mantra. These Bijaksharas have been endowed with a perennial store of power by the Tantrik seers and it needs only the living touch of the Guru to set them awake in the disciple.”

Sri Kapali Sastry illustrates the connection between the Veda and Tantra by considering a particular Tantra called as “Prapancha sara tantra.” It is made up of three verses, addressed to Durga, Shiva and Vishnu. All the three hymns are found in the Rig Veda. The first verse is from the 99th Sukta of the first book of Rig Veda and is addressed to Agni. The second verse is the 12th Rik of the 59th Sukta in the seventh book of the Rig Veda addressed to Rudra, the Trayambaka, father of the three worlds. In the Tantra it is addressed to the deity Rudra as Mrityunjaya, the conqueror of Death. The third verse of the Tantra is the famous Gayatri hymn in the 62nd Sukta of the third mandala of the Rig Veda. In the Veda it is addressed to Savitr, the effulgent one, and in the Tantra it is addressed to Vishnu, the image of all knowledge and power.

It is interesting to note that the group of the three verses, also called as Shatakshara Gayatri, is recited even today in the daily ritual for purifying the conch and the water. The symbolism is obvious: the primeval sound comes from its source, symbolized by the conch, naturally of its own accord when the impurities in the instrument are removed by invoking the gods or psychological powers.

VI. EXTERNAL INTERPRETATION OF VEDA

It is not our intention in this essay to dismiss the surface or exoteric interpretation of the Veda. A surface reading of the Veda throws immense light on the daily life of the Vedic Aryans and their attitudes to various happenings like growing up, youth, marriage, childbirth, construction of house, old age, death, various callings, etc. The general attitude can be summed up as one of “celebration of life” [10]. There is no tendency here such as the glorification of poverty which can be seen in some books of Hinduism of later periods. Some scholars view the various yogas such as Jnana Yoga (yoga of knowledge), Karma Yoga (yoga of works), Bhakti Yoga (yoga of devotion), Vibhuti Yoga (yoga of supernatural manifestations), etc., as developments whose basic idea can be traced to several hymns of the four Veda Samhitas, primarily to those of Rig Veda. Bose [11] for instance, has prepared an anthology of Vedas divided according to the various yogas whereas Raimundo Pannikar [10] has prepared an anthology of the Veda exemplifying it as the celebration of life.

It is easy to declare, as some Western historians of India and their Indian followers have done [8,9], that the Vedic Indians are basically tribes who composed ballads, sang them, fought wars, performed rituals, etc. A deeper investigation reveals that the knowledge possessed by the Vedic Aryans in fields like mathematics is comparable to that possessed by the Greeks at least a millien-nium later. For example, both the Shatapatha

Brahmana and the Taittereya Samhita indicate the specifications of the altars for performing the fire ritual like Mahavedi, the falcon-shaped altar made of seven and a half “square purushas.” These specifications involve the knowledge of geometrical ideas like the theorem of Pythagoras and properties of isosceles trapezoid. Based on an examination of the geometric ideas in the Vedic books Professor Seidenberg [7] proposed recently that the origin of mathematics must be attributed to the Vedic Aryans, not to the Babylonians as done by the great scholar Van der Warden.

However, most books of Indian history have statements such as the following about Vedic Indians [8,9]: The land of the seven rivers (modern Punjab of India and Pakistan) was originally populated by the dark skinned, flat nosed natives, most probably Dravidians. Aryans who came from North defeated the natives in the battle, massacred them, and drove away the remaining who went south to occupy the land called southern India. Usually the historians refer to the Rig Veda as their source for this theory and quote occidental Sanskrit scholars as the source for the above scenario. The latter group have made conjectures based on faulty and flimsy evidence and presented them as well-proven hypothesis. The abovementioned conjecture assumes that the gods headed by Indra in the Vedas are the incoming Aryans, the demons or asuras and dasyus as the natives of the soil, the title of Indra as Purandara (destroyer of cities) supposedly indicates the battle between

the two groups and finally the dasyus of the Veda are supposed to be the same as Dravidians because the former group is addressed as “Anasika” (or noseless) in the Vedas and the Dravidians supposedly have flat noses. No serious student of the Vedas can make such silly statements. The Vedas repeatedly and explicitly state that the gods and the dasyus are not human beings, but beings on a different plane of consciousness. The word “Anasika” quoted earlier occurs only once in the whole of Rig Veda having more than 10,000 verses. In the particular context of its use, the sage uses the objective “noseless” to indicate the non-human character of the dasyus. The existence of a small tribe even today in Baluchistan, part of Pakistan, whose members speak a language close to the Dravidian group can be more easily explained using Sri Aurobindo’s reasoning [3] that the Aryan languages and the so called Dravidian languages like Tamil, Kannada, etc., have a common origin and there is no need to invoke two distinct groups of people in ancient India who fought for real estate.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

One of the great contributions of Sri Kapali Sastry is to dispel the myth that the various Hindu scriptures like the Veda Samhitas, Upanishads, Yogas, Tantras, etc., are disparate and to demonstrate that they complement one another. If each major scripture like the Tantra or Yoga can be compared to a pearl, then Rigveda is like the string on which all these pearls are strung into a magni-

ficent necklace. The task of studying various scriptures to bring out their beauty and harmony has only just begun. Let us hope that more spiritual aspirants and scholars will take up the task of amplifying the truths which have been stated crisply and briefly by Sri Kapali Sasrty and Sri Aurobindo.

The translation of a few verses [16] of the last hymn in the Rig veda Samhita (X.191.2-4) is an appropriate finale to this essay. "Assemble together, speak with one voice, let your minds be of one accord...Let all the aspirants deliberate in a common way...united be the thought of all that all may live happily, ye may all happily reside."

References :

[1] The Rigveda Samhita with Sayana's Commentary, Vols. I-V; Vaidika Samshhodhana Mandala, Pune, India.

[2] Sri Kapali Sastry: The Collected Works, Vol. 1 (Vedas, Upanishads, Tantras and Gita) and Vols. 4A (The Sanskrit Commentary on the Rigveda Suktas 1-32, with English translation by Sri M. P. Pandit and Sri Sankaranarayanan), Vol. 5 (The Sanskrit Commentary on the Suktas 33-127); Dipti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605 002, India.

[3] Sri Aurobindo, "The Secret of the Veda, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, ibid.

[4] Sri M. P. Pandit (compiler), "Key to Vedic Symbolism," Dipti Publications, ibid.

[5] Rick Briggs, "Knowledge Representation in Sanskrit and Artificial Intelligence," The AI Magazine, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 32-39, Spring 1985.

[6] Swami Sri Bharatikrishna Tirtha, "Vedic Mathematics," edited by V. S. Agrawala, Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi pp. 194-195, 362, 1965.

[7] A. Seidenberg, "The Origin of Mathematics," The Archive for History of Exact Sciences, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 301-342, 1978.

[8] W. A. Fairsevis, Jr., "Roots of Ancient India," Revised Second Edition, University of Chicago Press, 1975.

[9] B. K. Ghosh, "The Origin of the Indo-Aryans," in "The Cultural Heritage of India," Vol. 1, Second Edition, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta, 1958.

[10] Raimundo Pannikar, "The Vedic Experience": (An Anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration), Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi, 1977.

[11] Abinash C. Bose, "Hymns from the Vedas." original text and English translation, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966.

[12] Ralph T. H. Griffith, "The Hymns of the Rigveda," New Revised Edition, Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi, 1973.

[13] Sri Ramakrishna, "Tales and Parables," compiled and published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4.

[14] Swami Madhavananda, "Brihadaranyaka Upanishad," English translation of the Sri Sankaracharya's Commentary with the original Sanskrit text, Fifth Edition, Advaita Ashrama, 5, Delhi Entally Road, Calcutta 700 014, 1975.

[15] Swami Swahananda, "Chandogya Upanishad," English translation with the original Sanskrit text, Second Edition, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1965.

[16] Swami Sharvananda, "The Vedas and Their Religious Teachings," in "The Cultural Heritage of India," Vol. 1, *ibid.*

JIVANMUKTA AND THE SUPERMAN

KESHAVMURTI

(Sri Keshavmurti, author of Space and Time, Sri Aurobindo: Hope of Man, is a sadhaka in Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He has been a keen student of Sastriar's writings).

In studying Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Philosophy, it is of utmost importance to bear in mind the connotations of many of the key-terms that the Master uses in his expositions. If we fail to take into account the precise meanings of these terms, we are likely to miss the import of his teachings altogether. Sri Kapali Sastriar cautions us to be particularly careful in this matter and advises us not to use Sri Aurobindo's statements and definitions lightly. Understandably, in the earlier days, there was confusion in the minds of many disciples and seekers, concerning the meaning and significance of words like Evolution, Superman, Supermind, Transformation etc., and it was probably in order to remove misunderstanding and likely misuse that Sastriar chose two concepts—Jivanmukta and Superman—and wrote an illuminating article which was later included in his seminal book, *Sri Aurobindo: Lights on the Teachings*. Fortunately, in recent times, more elucidations and explanations have been forthcoming from the utterances and writings of the Mother, and also from those who are practising Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga over years, so much so that things

have led to a better understanding of Sri Aurobindo's thoughts and concepts.

In the present paper, we propose to take up Sastriar's aforesaid article for a study in some detail, to see what light it throws on the two high spiritual ideals of Jivanmukti and Supermanhood, and to assess in what way and to what extent the ancient ideal of Jivanmukti stands related to Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's ideal of the Superman. In any case, as Jivanmukti is in many ways akin to *mukti*, we will take up the latter one first.

The word *mukti* or *moksha* is derived from the root *muc*, verb *muncati*. In the Vedic sense, it means 'untying', 'releasing' (a horse); in its extended sense it has come to mean liberation or deliverance from many kinds of fetters such as evil, disease, want, fear, death. In the Upanishadic sense, *mukti* means a release from all desires and freedom from bondage or works arising from desire. 'He who is established in *brahman* attains freedom from death (*amaratva*)'—says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Those who become *jnanis* by performing *tapasya* or *askesis* follow the way of the gods (*devayana*) and finally attain *brahman*. They do not return to the world of *samsara*; they are freed from the cycles of rebirth. Thus the widespread meaning of *mukti* or *moksha* is deliverance from the cycle of existence, liberation from the world of matter. A *mukta* is he who has entered upon a state of freedom and felicity.

Rebirth in the world is looked upon as a source of bondage, bringing experience of pleasure and

pain, joy and sorrow, disease and death. It binds the soul to the play of the three gunas—sattva, rajas, tamas. It forges Karma which acts inexorably as a cause-effect sequence binding souls to cycles of existence. As the Upanishad says, 'As a person intends, so he acts; as he acts, so he becomes.' Thus the soul creates its own destiny. It is the energy of Karma that drags the soul to repeated births and deaths.

According to the Gita, it is not action as such which binds; it is *Kama*, desire. The real *karma-sanyasa* is *kamasanyasa*, desirelessness. Desire produces attached activities. Desire is the motive-force. The Gita extols a life of activity but without desire and attachment. We should perform action with detachment, with devotion and to the best of our ability. By so doing, we cease to become links in the endless chain of Karma; ultimately we will reach the state of liberation, the compulsive need to be reborn arises no more.

But mukti is not easy to come by. Its demand is radical, its practice immensely difficult. It calls for a sustained and prolonged period of purification of mind, heart, emotions, sense, impulse, and other life-activities, and this kind of far-reaching purification requires an almost interminable time and toil probably extending over many lives. For example, it is not easy to surrender oneself to the Divine even with the best intentions to do so, and arrive at a state of Grace. It is the Divine Grace that dispels ignorance and brings about liberation. We have to learn to perform selfless action; we should be

motivated by no selfish desire. We must shed our ego and surrender our will to the Divine Will.

At first glance, the flow of Divine Grace seems incompatible with the law of Karma. Karma binds souls and keep them in chains. How can Grace enter into the situation and nullify the law of Karma? The Truth is, behind Karma is the Lord, the all-knowing Divine. Karma is a power working out the Divine Intention. The Divine, we must suppose, is as concerned with the impartial working of Karma as he is with the welfare and progress of his creatures, with their upliftment, with their journey towards their destination. It is the Divine's all-knowing Will that determines the nature of man's destiny, no matter what the role of Karma within the working of the Supreme Will, may be. Karma is a maturing process; it can be, and indeed is, a way and means to liberation. Karma is subordinate to God. It is only a secondary cause. Grace can put Karma to flight, so to speak. Karma is never more powerful than Divine Grace. The soul is free at its own level, ever and always; it is less free on the mental level more bound on the lower levels of life-force and physical. As the absolutely imperishable Divine is the self-determining ruler of the universe, mukti is Divine's gift to the aspiring and striving soul. "The Self is not to be won by eloquent teaching, nor by brain power, nor by much learning: but only he whom this Being chooses can win Him; for to him this Self bares His body." Thus declares the Katha Upanishad. In surrendering himself to God in all ways, man knows that his

self-offering is not his own but the Lord's. One may say that *prapatti* and Grace go together. It looks as if in the scheme of manifestation, both man and God wait for some excuse—one to receive the Grace and the other to bestow it, and at the end of the long evolutionary journey both man and God fuse in a grand play—Lila.

When his ignorance is dispelled, the mukta realises the freedom of his soul or spirit housed in his body. He sees Self in all beings and all beings in the Self. The separative consciousness which is at the root of Ignorance is replaced by the consciousness of the One, the Self. His spirit which is set free reaches the Divine. He will know *brahman*, in *brahman* he is established. He is a liberated man. He witnesses no distinction between within and without, between the knower and the known. For *brahman* is ever the same, residing in all things. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

...the highest emergence is the liberated man who has realised the Self and Spirit within him, entered into the cosmic consciousness, passed into union with the Eternal and, so far as he still accepts life and action, acts by the light and energy of the Power within him working through his human instruments of Nature. The largest formulation of this spiritual achievement is a total liberation of soul, mind and heart and action, a casting of them all into the sense of the cosmic Self and the Divine Reality. This is the essence of the spiritual ideal and realisation held before

us by the Gita...Beyond this height and largeless there opens only the supramental ascent or the incommunicable Transcendence".
(*Essays on the Gita*)

The Indian religious and spiritual tradition draws its deepest inspiration from the perennial founts of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. Yet these ancient scriptures branch out into several paths, leading to different kinds of disciplines and culminating in as many ways of God-realisation. There is not one but many kinds of relations that can be established between the seeker and the Divine, various lines of mukti. Sri Aurobindo points out:

There is a union in spiritual essence by identity; there is a union by the indwelling of our soul in this highest Being and Consciousness; there is a dynamic union of likeness or oneness of nature between That and our instrumental being here. The first one is liberation from the Ignorance and identification with the Real and Eternal, moksha, *sayujya*, which is the characteristic aim of the Yoga of Knowledge. The second, the dwelling of the soul with or in the Divine, *samipya*, *salokya*, is the intense hope of all Yoga of Love and Beatitude. The third, identity in nature, likeness to the Divine, to be perfect as That is Perfect, *sad-harmya*, is the high intention of all Yoga of Power and Perfection of Divine Works and Service.
(*The Synthesis of Yoga*)

Against this background, let us consider the position of a Jivanmukta.

Jivanmukta is a mukta in a special sense. As the word denotes, it is the attainment of liberation while one still lives in one's physical body. There is a line of Vedantic thought to which Sastriar draws attention and that is that liberation is not possible while one lives in the body. Only *videha mukti* is recognised as the real and valid mukti, i.e., liberation is possible only after death and not while one lives in the body. According to this view, some kind of spiritualhood may be possible of attainment while living but true liberation follows only after the body is shed.

There are, of course, other points of view, other lines of truth of Jivanmukti. Jivanmukti is not only highly desirable but forms an indispensable state in a yoga like Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. According to integral sadhana, mukti marks a stage, an important stage, in man's spiritual journey. Mukti in this sense is much more than freedom from rebirth and Karma. Admittedly, Jivanmukta attains spiritual consciousness, his soul or spirit is identified with the Highest Consciousness; he is assured of his freedom from rebirth. But it is not for the attainment of his freedom from rebirth that an integral seeker follows the spiritual quest. He has other goals, higher ends to reach, and Jivanmukti is just such a stage from where he embarks on a greater and higher spiritual journey.

Jivanmukti is an exalted condition of an embodied being in which as Sastriar puts it, 'wisdom

reigns and dispels doubt, and action is no bondage.' He is a *sada mukta*, living in brahmic consciousness always even while engaged in external activities. He is in samadhi at all times even while engaged in outer life movements. This waking samadhi is his 'effortless normal stage of consciousness.'

Not all Jivanmuktas are stamped in the same mould. For instance, as Sastriar observes, one Jivanmukta, after realising his identity with the brahman, can stop all his mundane activities or keep them to the minimum possible. Another one, even while maintaining his identity with the Divine, can plunge himself into any kind of work, because he realises that all powers proceed from the Lord and executed by the Lord, the man being no more than a surrendered instrument of the Divine. If he has realised God through the Path of Knowledge, he could afford to say, in the words of Sastriar: "Why do you people flit from pillar to post, what is there to worry? It is maya. There is no bondage, no birth. We are all undying Self. Atman is alone true, the rest is unreal." That indeed is the state of his consciousness which is identified with the Self. On the other hand, if a Jivanmukta is temperamentally a devotee, he loves the whole manifestation—men, women, children, animals, plants. Or, he may be a soul, a Jivanmukta, chosen by the Divine for a specific work and he is under constant guidance of the all controlling eternal Divine Consciousness. Sastriar sums up these different types or moulds of Jivanmuktas in these words. "While the experience of unity and the

realisation of brahman or God, the omnipresent One, may be common to all Jivanmuktas, their behaviour of life, their thoughts and language and the formulations of method, and, if they happen to be thinkers their construction of philosophical systems vary very largely and quite often.”

Speaking of chosen souls, Mother observes:

Those who have gone beyond the stage of successive reincarnations and are destined to participate in a certain terrestrial action... for those who have come back on earth only for a particular work, personal external realisations are sacrificed to that.

We may note here the distinction which Sri Aurobindo makes between the Brahman and the Parabrahman in the context of Jivanmukti. In his commentary on Isha Upanishad, he equates Brahman with Sachchidananda. He who has attained the Brahman has become Sachchidananda and he is a Jivanmukta. If he chooses, he can, after the death of his body, merge with the Parabrahman, the Absolute, the Unknowable, and go out of manifestation. He may, however, choose to remain in the world. Sri Aurobindo points out that Brahman and Parabrahman are not contradictory terms; they are not two but in fact one. “Parabrahman can always and at will draw Sachchidananda into Itself and Sachchidananda can always and at will draw into Parabrahman. Then a question arises: when the individual self becomes identified with the Supreme, it becomes merged

with the Supreme. Its evolution is then over; how then does it return into the phenomenal world to tell the story of its experience? Answering this question, Sri Aurobindo, in his *The Upanishads* refers to three highest lines of experience that are possible of attainment. Conceiving the Divine as a noble temple in a metaphorical sense, the first experience is, in his words, “when we stand at the entrance of the porch and look within; the second when we stand at the inner extremity of the porch and are really face to face with the Eternal; the third when we enter into the Holy of Holies...Well, then the first stage is well within the possible experience of man and from it man returns to be a Jivanmukta, one who lives and is yet released in his inner self from the bondage of phenomenal existence; the second stage once reached, man does not ordinarily return unless he is a supreme Buddha,—or perhaps as a world Avatar; from the third stage none returns ...Brahman as realised by the Jivanmukta seen from the entrance of the porch, is that which we usually term Parabrahman, the supreme Eternal and the subject of the most exalted descriptions of the Vedanta.”

In the *Hour of God*, Sri Aurobindo observes: “All who go out of the universal consciousness do not necessarily go into Parabrahman. Some go into undifferentiated Nature (avyakrita Prakriti), some lose themselves in God, some pass into a dark state of non-recognition of universe (asat, sunya), some into luminous state of non-recognition of universe,—pure undifferentiated Atman, Pure Sat

or Existence-Basis of universe,—some into a temporary state of deep sleep (*susupti*) in the impersonal principles of Ananda, Chit or Sat. All these are forms of release and ego gets from God by his Maya or Prakriti the impulse towards any of these to which the supreme Purusha chooses to direct him. Those whom he wishes to liberate, yet keep in the world, he makes them Jivanmuktas or sends them out again as His vibhutis, they consenting to wear for the divine purposes a temporary veil of Avidya.”

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother does not, however, seek after or favour immergence of individual self in the Parabrahman. Its Ultimate goal is different and as a step towards fulfilment of that aim it may seek Jivanmukti in the universe. We should live *in* the world, not released *out* of the world, says Sri Aurobindo, not because we need to be freed or for any other reason, but because that is God’s Will in us. Certainly a Jivanmukta can go wherever he chooses to go, either into Nirvana or to one of the Divine Kingdoms and even while he is moving about in different planes or worlds or is staying in one of them he can keep himself in touch with the earth and return to it as often as he wants.

Is Jivanmukta still bound by his past action? We know there are various kinds of Karma: *sanchita* Karma is Karma accumulated and brought forward from our past embodiments into the present one,—that which will mature in future; *prarabhdha* Karma, that part of the *sanchita* which has to be

worked out in the present life; *agamiya* Karma which is what is being forged in our present day-to-day life. Part of the last-mentioned Karma may be worked out in the present life itself and what is not exhausted is carried over to the pool of *sanchita* Karma. If a person progresses spiritually and becomes a fit instrument of the Divine and his soul relinquishes its agency, *kartrutva*, all the *agamiya* Karma acquired during his present embodiment is burnt up along with the entire heap of *sanchita* Karma, and the man is said to have arrived at a Jivanmukta's stage. His ego no longer exists and his will operates as an instrument of the Divine Will. Since the sense of I-ness and mine-ness in action is that which forges Karma and since it has been transcended by the soul, the Jivanmukta no longer acquires further *agamiya* Karma. He may probably go through *utkata* Karma, the ineluctable Karma, which has become imminent.

Sri Aurobindo holds that Jivanmukta will not be bound by further deeds but his past deeds have to be worked out. Admittedly, Jivanmukta is not bound, for he has realised his unity in God and he is only performing *nishkama* Karma. However, Prakriti attached to jivatman has built up Karma while it lived in Ignorance and these will have to be worked out in order not to disturb "the whole economy of nature." Sri Aurobindo makes this observation: "In order to maintain the world therefore Jivanmukta remains working like a prisoner on parole, not bound indeed by others, but

detained by himself until the period previously appointed for his captivity shall have elapsed.”

It has been pointed out earlier that without the Divine Grace attainment of mukti or Jivanmukti is impossible. Sastriar emphasises this truth in these explicit words: “Nor is such an exalted state reached by anyone through personal exertion alone. However straightforward, enlightened and onepointed may be the efforts made by the seeker, the ultimate result is not worked out by the ego-bound mentality of the man...personal exertion, though usually a necessary condition for preparing the human being for spiritual realisation, cannot bear fruit without the finishing touch for consummation favoured by the Higher Power which may act through a human Guru or may be directly the Divine Grace itself.”

To sum up: Jivanmukta is one who has solved his personal problem, the problem of Ignorance. He has realised the Self, the Impersonal Divine or the Divine Personality whichever aspect was dear to him and he was after. Whether this phenomenal world appears to him real or illusory depends upon the type of realisation he has had. Pain and pleasure, happiness or sorrow have little or no relevance to him, they leave no trace. He fronts everything with an impenetrable calm and equality. He is no longer the ego he once was. He is through with the fear of birth or death, he is no more obsessed with fate or destiny. He cares less for the result of his works. Karma binds him not,

for he has no personal desire and his will is tuned to the Divine Will for all time.

Granted the aspiring soul has reached Jivan-mukti, what next? That is a gnawing question: Is the purpose of manifestation only this—to reach individual souls to the Source whence they came? Or, is recall or return,—be it the immergence in the Absolute or identity with the Brahman,—the sole intention of Creation, the purpose for which the world was made? The Mother raises this poignant question in her inimitable manner:

The whole creation, the whole universal manifestation appears at best a very bad joke if it only comes to this. Why begin at all if it is only to get out of it! What is the use of having struggled so much, suffered so much, if having created something which, at least in its external appearance, is so tragic and dramatic, if it is only to teach you how to get out of it—it would have been better not to begin at all.

Sri Aurobindo gives a friendly admonition. Addressing the liberated being he says in his epic *Savitri*

O soul, it is too early to rejoice.

Is liberation the sole mission of life, or is there still something Beyond? Is it for personal salvation that the soul takes birth? No. There is a nobler mission which gets started only after the soul obtains its deliverance from Ignorance and Falsehood. To stay put at the level of mukti has not much significance. The mukta must press on.

The life that wins its aim asks greater aims.

The liberated being can put this question to himself: by escaping from the cycles of rebirth what have I added to myself? What does my liberation mean to others who are groping in Ignorance and Darkness? My victory does not amount to much,

Because only half God's work is done.

Realisation of Self is not the end of the journey. All that the embodied soul has done is to push Ignorance and Falsehood away from it. But this is not to say that it has completed the work of the cosmos. It has accomplished only half the work. It has said NO to Ignorance and driven it away. Very rightly, for that is the great utility of a NO in the scheme of things. But what about the demand for a YES?

But where is the lover's everlasting Yes.

The heart clamours for something positive, a Yes, for love which arises from deep within. So the liberated man must proceed further. He has a new goal to reach and a more difficult path to tread. And that Path which Sri Aurobindo and Mother have discovered is the Path of the Supramental Yoga.

The Supramental Yoga is not an escape from the physical world which leaves it irrevocably to its fate, nor is it a helpless acceptance of material life for what it is, without any hope of a decisive change of man or of the world as the final expression of the Divine Will. The Integral Yoga (also called supramental yoga) aims at scaling all the degrees of consciousness

from the ordinary mental consciousness to a Supramental and Divine Consciousness, and when the ascent is completed, to return to the material world and infuse it with the supramental Force and Consciousness that have been won, so that the earth may be gradually transformed into a supramental and divine world.

Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have pointed out that man, the highest-evolved creature in creation, is a transitional being. He has had several natures one after another in an ascending curve. He is moving farther towards acquiring and possessing a new kind of consciousness called the Supramental Consciousness, eventually transforming his human nature into Divine Nature, human being to supramental being. The Mother has affirmed that there would be a connecting link between the human being and the supramental being, and that link is called the Superman.

Before we discuss what Superman means in the context of Sri Aurobindo's Supramental Yoga, let us begin by noticing what Superman is not. Superman is not a super giant, a hero of impossible feats, a mighty man with extraordinary physical, vital and mental prowess. He is not a solitary ego who feels qualified to rule over men and worlds. He is not a Nietzschean superman who is, in the words of the Mother, "a man aggrandised, magnified, in whom Force has become superdominant, crushing under its might all the other attributes of man." Nor does it mean, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "any

Olympian, Appolonian or Dionysian, any angelic or demoniac supermanhood". What is he then?

*Even as of old man came behind the beast
This high divine successor surely shall come
Behind man's inefficient mortal pace, -
Behind his vain labour, sweat, and blood and
tears;
He shall know what mortal mind barely durst
think,
He shall do what the heart of the mortal could not
dare.*

(Savitri)

Superman of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's vision is the pioneer of a new race, the man of tomorrow, the "One Immortal in His lower mental being." He is one "whose whole personality has been offered up into the being, nature and consciousness of the one transcendent and universal Divinity and by loss of the smaller self has found its greater self, has been divinised. Superman 'is the divinised human being, the Best.'

In dealing with the subject of superman, Sri Kapali Sastriar provides the necessary Vedantic background in the light of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. There is one supreme Reality which creates or manifests the universe out of Itself and in Itself. All is Brahman, the one eternal Sachchidananda which is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. And yet this world, with ourselves in it, which is the manifestation of the supreme Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, is not perfect, is not blissful. Why?

Sastriar shows how the evolution or consciousness which forms an important plank of Sri Aurobindo's teaching explains this paradox. He mentions that man's present state of existence is not what the creation is intended to become eventually. Man is still in the process of becoming; he is yet to reach his goal.

In the words of the Mother:

The world is not immediately what it is. The earth is in a period of transition that certainly seems long to the brief human consciousness, but which is infinitesimal for the eternal consciousness. And this period will come to an end with the appearance of the supramental consciousness. The contradictions will then be replaced by harmonies and the oppositions by syntheses.

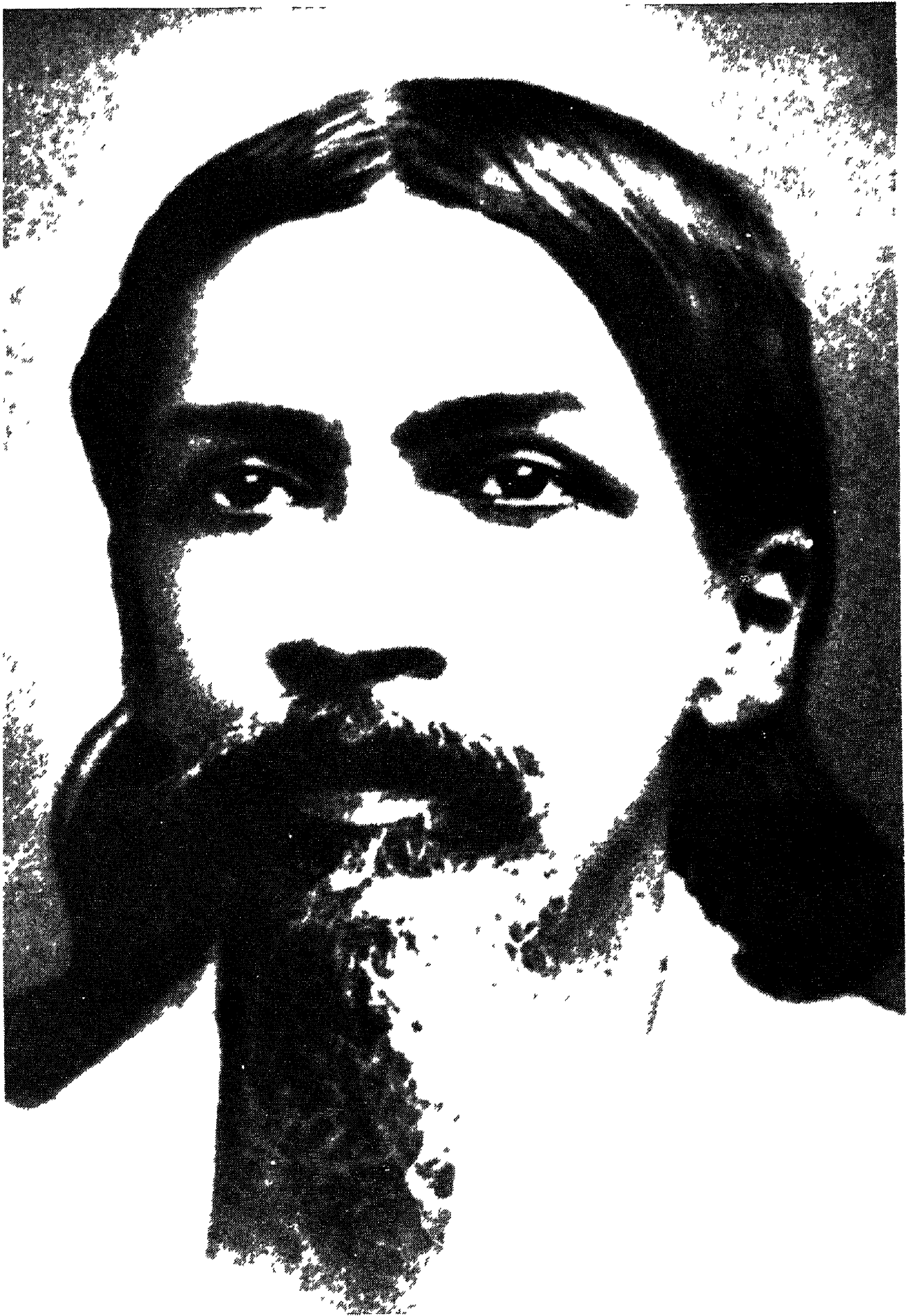
At present man is in the middle term of his existence. What does the 'middle term' mean? The answer brings us to a consideration of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of evolution. Stated in a few words: creation is an involution-evolution movement. The highest Divine Principle chooses to become progressively veiled and successively descends from the position of an all-knowing supreme Spirit at the top to the lowest level of inconscient Matter below. All the highest aspects of Sat-Chit-Ananda congeal to become their negations, their opposites as it were. This process of self-determination, self-limitation and self-absorption of the supreme Spirit and its descent is called involution. Then starts the evolution or the ascent from

Nescience to Supreme Consciousness. The veiled power of the supreme Spirit inherent in the Inconscience serves as an urge towards the upward movement. Thus Life evolves in Matter because Life is already involved in Matter. And from Life emerges Mind, because Mind is inherent in life and matter. That is to say, Matter is a form of veiled life and Life is a form of veiled consciousness. And Mind itself is a veiled form of something beyond and higher than Mind. Then as Life has emerged from Matter, Mind from Life, something higher and greater than Mind must emerge from Mind as an evolutionary necessity. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have affirmed that such indeed is the case. Man the mental being, whose roots are in the Inconscient Matter, in the subconscient life, has to evolve and eventually blossom into something infinitely greater than mind which Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind. Man is neither at the bottom of creation nor at the top, but he is in the middle. That is what it means that man is in the middle term of his existence. It is the characteristic feature of this middle state that Ignorance, Falsehood, Pain, Suffering, Disease and Death are the badges of his life. These are not, however, permanent. We accept them as temporary features of our ego-bound, limited, ignorant life. We must make earnest efforts to overpass them. Sri Aurobindo explains that the evolutionary labour of the Creative Spirit is to establish a new Consciousness and Force, called Supermind, which will make it possible for the eventual emergence of a new race of

Gnostic beings in a Gnostic society which would usher in real Peace, Power, Light, Ananda, Immortality, securely and permanently in earth life.

Supermind is the creative power of Sachchidananda. It is the first status through which manifestation takes place. It is also called the Gnostic Mind or Gnosis, to differentiate it from the mind of Ignorance. Supermind is the dynamic Truth-Consciousness, Real-Idea, Rit-Chit of the Vedas, or Self-awareness of the Supreme in which Knowledge and Power are inseparably one like the light and heat of the sun. From the mind of Ignorance to the highest Light and Power of the Supermind is indeed a far cry. A thick veil separates the two, besides there are intervening planes—from mind to Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind etc., before the plane of Supermind is reached. Man is incapable of reaching Supermind on his own. So Herculean is the task of crossing these planes that in crucial stages of man's evolutionary career, Avatars have had to descend and bridge the great gulfs and make it possible for man to cross over and reach the Higher Consciousness. Krishna is one such Avatar who embodied Overmind Consciousness and established it on earth. Now the Overmind plane has also been crossed, thanks to the unbending efforts of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the highest principles of Supermind have been firmly established in the earth consciousness.

The Mother clarifies that the supramental realisation cannot be described without first experi-



Sri Aurobindo

encing it. All that can be said in faith is that the realisation leads to the next step, i.e. transformation of human consciousness into the Divine and the supramental. In the supramental world, we do not discard our present world or ourselves, as we might do if we had accepted *laya* or dissolution in the Parabrahman as our spiritual goal. In fact in the supramental world we retain our personal form, our individualisation. We recognise that real fulfilment of life is not mukti, is not self-cancellation, but to become perfect as the Divine is perfect. The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is the path that leads man and earth to this destiny. Man is Nature's vessel and the medium; it is in him that She is seeking the fulfilment of her eventual goal, the summit of her aeons of labour. Man who has arrived at the stage of a self-conscious being must consciously enter into this forward movement, recognising the urge implanted in him, and carry the mantle of evolutionary progress. The rest is left to the Divine Power, the Divine Shakti. What we have to bear in mind is that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are the pioneers of the Supramental age. For many decades they laboured, struggled and suffered and finally brought down the Supramental Consciousness for the first time in earth's history and made it part of the earth's consciousness. With the force of this New Consciousness man, when he takes his decision today or tomorrow or some day to fulfil the required conditions, can become a superman and from superman to supramental being.

How does superman come into the picture, we can ask.

‘Superman’, ‘Transformation’ are some of the key-terms in Sri Aurobindo’s teaching. Let us take ‘transformation’ first. It is a comprehensive term and means much more than conversion or change of consciousness from the human to the Divine. The highmark of transformation consists in the conversion of human being into the Divine being and the human nature into the Divine Nature. It is a radical and durable change that proceeds from within, outwards. Such a transformation is clearly outside the scope of human effort. Mother and Sri Aurobindo have said that there will be an intermediate race linking man with supramental being. This intermediate race is the race of superman, It is at the level of supermanhood that all animal ways of being and of expression are likely to disappear. But superman will not have the absolute perfection of a body that is purely supramental in its formation. Mother adds:

It can be asserted with certainty that there will be an intermediate specimen between the mental and supramental being, a kind of superman who still have the qualities and in part the nature of man, that is, who will still belong in his more external form to the human being with its animal origin, but will have transformed his consciousness sufficiently to belong in his realisation and activity to a new race, a race of superman.

At another place she has said:

Since their (supermen's) origin is human, there is inevitably a contact; even if everything is transformed, even if their organs are transformed into centres of force, a sort of human colouration still remains. These are the beings...who will discover the secret of direct supramental creation, bypassing the process of ordinary Nature. Through them the true supramental beings will be born.

What is the actual process of transformation of nature that will enable the supramental creation to be established on earth? This remains an open question. Probably the process will proceed by stages, by degrees, with the needed faculties built slowly and suddenly emerging or manifesting in its own hour. As the Mother points out, it must be similar to what happened when the first man appeared. Though a lot of speculation still goes on, nobody knows for certain as to how the first human came into existence and under what conditions and environment. "Were they isolated individuals or were they in groups? Did the phenomena take place in a collective milieu or in isolation?" Nobody can say. Probably it is going to be the same in the coming supramental creation also.

Mother has made revealing observations concerning the coming superman. Superman is a being now in the making. He is a new species, a new race with new capacities, new force of consciousness bringing new principles of truth and action in the

new age that is dawning. He does not resemble a man as man does not resemble a monkey. Admittedly superman will be born in the animal way but he creates a spiritual influx which even the best of men do not have. No one has reached the final stage of superman so far. The work of superman is to transform his physical being. The degree of transformation depends upon each one's capacity and there may be partial successes and there may even be failures in the attempts, but eventually we come to something like the superman, a new creation.

Talking of apprentice-supermen, Mother says:

All those who strive to overcome their ordinary nature, all those who try to realise materially the deeper experience which brought them into contact with the divine Truth, all those who, instead of yearning to the Beyond or the Highest, try to realise physically, externally, the change of consciousness they have realised within themselves—all are apprentice-supermen. And there, there are countless differences in the success of their efforts. Each time we try not to be an ordinary man, not live the ordinary life, to express in our movements, our actions and reactions the divine Truth, when we are governed by that Truth instead of being governed by the general ignorance, we are apprentice-supermen, and according to the success of our efforts, well, we are more or less able apprentices, more or less advanced on the way.

KAPALI SASTRIAR AND THE CREATIVE WORD

RAND HICKS

(A scholar with Sanskritic background, Rand Hicks is a deep student of Indian tradition. Currently he is the Director of the Integral Knowledge Study Center, Pensacola (Florida) U.S.A. apart from his managerial responsibilities in a national business concern.)

Even thirty years and more after his passing hence, we still haven't fully sounded the depths of this remarkable sage who stood and stands as a bridge between ancient and future India, Sri T. V. Kapali Sastriar. Perhaps the most suggestive measure of Kapali's impressive scholastic achievements, though, was his honest refusal to write about the supernal truths of spiritual India unless and until he had already experienced and established those verities within himself. To write meant first to realise. That a fresh utterance and seasoned appraisal of these timeless truths found powerful expression through him in poetry and prose in several languages, including Sanskrit, Tamil, and English, is now widely recognised and at once places Kapali visibly in the forward march of the Sana-tana Dharma.

Kapali's regard for the integrity of the sacred Word found suitable expression in a pair of notable essays that have guided many Sanskritists towards a

fuller appreciation of the subject. The two are “Sphota and the Spoken Word”, and “The Vak of the Veda and the Throb of the Tantra”, each now included in the first volume of his *Collected Works*.

The basic and forthright conception we meet in these essays is that it is the divine Word that creates and orders the Universe, an insight that we first meet in the Veda but which echoes throughout the length and breadth of the Indian spiritual tradition.¹ Drawing directly from the Veda, Kapali notes that it is the mother Goddess herself as Vak who has become all these worlds, *vāgeva viśva bhuvanāni jajñe*. And though Vak means voice, the sages are careful to distinguish the divine voice,—whose home is in the highest heaven where the Gods and the mantras too reside,—from human speech born of the mind and senses. The supernal Voice attunes itself to the mental, but is itself of loftier origin.

These several ideas find direct mention in the Rig Veda, I. 164. 39-45. There it is stated that

¹ We find this truth visioned in our own century in Sri Aurobindo’s epic poem, *Savitri*:

A Wisdom knows and guides the mystiered world;
A Truth-gaze shapes its beings and events;
A Word self-born upon creation’s heights,
Voice of the Eternal in the temporal spheres,
Prophet of the seeings of the Absolute,
Sows the Idea’s significance in Form
And from that seed the growths of Time arise.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1970, p. 271.

there are four steps (or *padāni*) of Vak, three hidden in regions above, while only the fourth and lowest step manifests as human speech. The divine origin of the Eternal Word given here and its multi-leveled presence in the created Universe has great significance, for this creation from a primordial Word and its consequent fourfold division into a hierarchical Cosmos reappears again in similar formulations in the Upanishads and the Tantras, though differences in detail and emphasis always remain. In the Taittiriya Upanishad, for instance, we discover in I. 8 that it is the sacred syllable AUM that is the Eternal who puts forth the manifold universe which is again AUM, and still AUM remains as the empowered means of reascending to the attainment of the Eternal. But it is in the famous Mandukya Upanishad that this reality of AUM reveals its embodiment in a fourfold Existence in which *jagrat* represents the material world, *swapna* the life world, *sushupti* the divine Mind, and *turiya* the effulgent realm of the supreme Truth-Consciousness.

As profound as the insights in the Upanishads are, the most explicit treatment of the creative power of the Word comes in the Tantric analysis. And there too Vak is not merely the audible speech of the human, though that is its outward and Instrumental form, but possesses more significantly a subtle and essential aspect behind the external.

Psychologically seen, the word-sound has within its essence (the *sphota*) an inherent power of the

Spirit, *śakti*, which manifests as the external spoken word when it moves into expression. Proceeding from the one Eternal, this inner sound conveys its resonant truth through the series of worlds till it manifests as the physically audible word. The four steps of the Vak appear in the Tantra as different grades of being and consciousness represented microcosmically in the subtle centres of the nervous system.¹

We are led ineluctably by Kapali to the view that the meanings of sound taking form in language cannot be randomly or conventionally derived. A superior consciousness evokes the sound which suggests even vibrationally its property and meaning to the mind, and though some words hail evidently from the vital and nervous experiences of man in response to his environment, there is another class of words that have a psychological origin and spiritual authorship. Here exists a pregnant relation between the psychological and the physical.

This psychological dimension underlines the practice of *mantra-sādhana*, for the mantras reveal themselves to be powerful vehicles that evoke the realities they represent and act as conscious vehicles in which the seeker attains to hidden realms. Unlike ordinary speech, the mantra is revelatory poetry carrying into thought and song the higher

¹ *Para-vāk* is beyond, but turned towards manifestation, and is fixed in the muladhara; *pasyanti*, the seeing word, is in the navel centre; *madhyama*, the subtle word, resides between the navel and throat centres; and *vaikhari*, the expressive speech, is in the throat centre itself.

vibrations native to its origin, and hence impregnating them with a power of effectuation absent in ordinary speech. Through the attentive repetition of the mantra, whether vocally or inwardly spoken (for the attuned thought-vibrations are again a subtler form of mantric sound), the disclosure of a hierarchy of worlds leading to the radical and unitive light of AUM can open for the prepared and consecrated seeker.¹

And now we can return to the Veda to see that here too the mantra becomes the articulated means of spiritual ascent. This is especially clear in the many hymns addressed to Agni, where the voice, Vak, is intoned to awaken Agni who in man is aspiration developing into Divine Will. By his voice Agni articulates the prayer and carries the soul of man towards the Gods and Truth, ordaining and securing the routes by which the self-offered gifts of the aspirant reach their divine destinations. The blessed states into which these ancient singers were lifted is testimony enough to the efficacy of these evocative Words of the Veda. Who reaches that highest heaven, *paramam vyoma*, can truly wield that empowered word which is self-effectuating.²

The insight first recorded in the Veda that the world proceeds from the Word found a later formulation outside India as well, notably in early Christian, Hermetic, and Kabbalistic traditions. We have only to look at the familiar opening verses

¹ Op. cit., p. 265.

² *Rig Veda*, I. 164.39-45.

of the *Gospel According to John* to meet the creative Word as the Greek *logos*. The Logos as world-creator appears too in the hermetic texts and inscriptions where, identified with the Egyptian god Thoth, he is not only the creator but an ordering principle who is called “the measurer”, suggesting a cosmological kinship with the Sanskrit *māyā* in its older usage.¹

Most striking, though, is the similarity of treatment we find in Jewish mysticism, for in the Kabbalistic doctrines we learn that not only is the world a creation of the Word of Yahweh, but that all created things are generated from a single primordial sound which is also a divine “joyous cry”, and are subsequently drawn back into that divine Being by the same cry of joy.² Those familiar with the Indian tradition will find notes sounded here that are reminiscent of the Bull’s Roar of the Veda and Upanishad, and the sublime insight recorded in the Taittiriya Upanishad that it is Delight that ultimately creates, sustains, and dissolves the Cosmos.

The careful exegesis and penetrating insight that we have too briefly scanned here in viewing some small part of Kapali Sastriar’s synthetic work in the world’s spiritual traditions is characteristic of the range of his powers. We find behind

¹ G.R.S. Mead, *Thrice Greatest Hermes*, Volume I, Fernald, Hermes Press, 1978, p. 53.

² Leo Schaya, *The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah*, Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1973, p. 164.

his consummate scholarship an authentic spiritual vision eminently capable of penetrating the “seer-wisdoms that speak out their sense to the seer”.¹ Of very few can more be said. Let us honour him.

¹ *Rig Veda*. IV. 3.16.

THE LITERARY SIDE OF SRI T.V. KAPALI SASTRY

PROF. B. H. SREEDHAR

(The writer is a well known critic and literary artist in Sanskrit and Kannada, a recipient of many honours from centres of Learning.)

Sri T.V. Kapali Sastry is more known as a Spiritualist than as a Literateur. But it is not the whole truth about his career. His flair for Sanskrit Literature is seen in a small book called "Side-lights in Sanskrit Literature", published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, in 1963.

In the opinion of Sri Aurobindo, Sanskrit is the Mother of many languages of India and the world. In his "Secret of the Veda" he states that even Tamil words are traceable to Sanskrit roots. The question and answers that he has given in the book remains uncontroverted and unrefuted. So this language is Divine but made to appear difficult by the Pandits who made a God of its grammar as time went on. Hence people changed it into Prakrits and Apabhramshas and use the latter today by and large.

But the classical Sanskrit set very good examples of modified Sanskrit in its great epics, dramas and short stories like the Panchamahakavyas, the plays of Bhasa and Kalidasa and Panchatantra, Hitopadesha etc.

The greater the mastery of a man on the subject and the language, the simpler will be his style

of presentation. The works of Bhasa exemplify this saying. The English used by Mahatma Gandhi is a modern example. The Mother's Prayers are some of the finest examples. Sri Kapali Sastry belongs to this category of masters. His Sanskrit writings came under the class of *drākshāpāka* as different from the *nārikelapāka*. His *kavyakhandasya prathamanshah* is a very good attempt at changing Bharavi's *nārikelapāka* (or the difficult style) into *drākshāpāka* (or the easy style). The spoken Sanskrit that is used to broadcast from Delhi nowadays is a good example of simple Sanskrit that we can use for our every day purposes.

The art of letter writing in Sanskrit can be modelled upon Sri Sastry's *Lekha Ekah*. Lucidity or clarity is the hall-mark of his style. Sri Aurobindo's Supramental Truth of Sachchidananda is the Vast One known for its clarity and omnipresence, Omniscience and omnipotence, in addition. In his *Upanishadupadishtam* Sri Kapali Sastry pertinently concludes at the end of his short and significant essay with the words *iha chedavedidatha satyamasti, nacheditravedit mahati vinashtih*. His subtlety of intuition finds that the consciousness of the existence of the Absolute Truth in which all of us exist is the highest goal of human life. We exist in it as itself in the state of the Absolute or absorption in the universal consciousness of the Supreme Truth after losing all our separate existence in consciousness. We are now not conscious of this unity though we believe in it. The non-

controversial way in which Sri Sastry sums up the essence of the Upanishadic Teachings is highly satisfactory.

His explanation of the suggestive capacity of the meanings of words is similar to Sri Aurobindo's theory of symbolism which he finds in the Vedic hymns. Every science has its own logic and every logic has its own fundamental assumptions which have no objective proofs. Hence, symbolism or suggestivity is the key to the sense of words of inspired utterances.

As a critic, Sri Sastry deals with the aesthetic problems of truth in poetry. It is called *rasa* which is stimulated in the mind of the aesthetic by the art of an artist. *Rasa* is said to be the Atman in the Taittiriya Upanishad. It is essence, it is always revealed and it is one with the esthete in his aesthetic consciousness. Our experience confirms this and Sri Sastry reveals the qualities of a born teacher while explaining the problem to a novice in the subject.

Dealing with the problem of castes in India, the author simplifies the meaning of *jati* by saying that it is not only a professional guild but also a class of people following a particular style of living; food habits, dress habits, worship habits etc. of a particular type constitute a caste and it does not come in the way of national unity and it persists everywhere and nobody need be proud of his caste as all castes are necessary for making up a civilisation. This appears to be the purport of his analysis which is worthy of acceptance by all. Character, qualities and activities of a human being make

him factually feel that he belongs to a particular caste or religious sect. It is just natural and it should not lead to any hostile feeling among the peoples of a country or the world. The social consciousness of a true man of letters is this and so his works become popular among all castes of people and internationally recognised. In the language of Sri Aurobindo a universal man is an integral advaitin in his heart and head (as the teachings of Sri Aurobindo summarised at the 52nd session of the All India Philosophical Congress).

Collected Notes and Papers of Sri T. V. Kapali Sastry edited and published by Sri M. P. Pandit in 1965 gives us some examples of the former's philosophical writings.

The essay on the prayer, its import, states that the Divine Mother is the Absolute Truth or Sat, the Sole Reality. This world of ignorance is an imperfect manifestation of her own true existence. There must be a readiness somewhere in the earth-consciousness to open to the influence of the psychic being, the inner soul—he concludes. In the next essay on Surrender this 'readiness' is explained. Surrender is an inward act of feeling. By that the sense of egoistic independence gives way and something higher and larger slowly takes charge of the being, introduces different values which may quite often supersede the accepted set of moral values and in the end completely takes away all sense of responsibility (either for the good or for the bad that one does). This state of freedom from life of Ignorance is *sadgati*, in the language of the Upa-

nishads. The essayist points out next that it is Truth (Sad-Jyoti-Amrita). He says about Sri Krishna, the Truth, that in keeping with his original form, he is the Lord of the Universe: an 'avatara' for the purpose of the world-manifestation: a celebrity as the premier of the clan of the Yadu and the Rishi Narayana due to his relationship across the births.

After the justification of his commentary on the *Umāsaahasram* whose author is the late Vasishta Ganapati Muni, the modern Kalidasa or Shankaracharya in lyricism, Sastriar writes on Yatindra-mata-Dipika and makes an important remark that the apparent contradiction found in our scriptures are facts of experience and they can be reconciled in a knowledge of the spiritual consciousness alone and not in any meta-physical sword-rattling. This applies both to the theists as well as the atheists under all circumstances. Because 'consciousness' is not identical with 'knowledge' in all respects; if the former is concrete, the latter is abstract (imaginings or inferences or mediate awareness or cognition of conclusion).

His essay on devotion to God and its secret praises Madhusudana Saraswati's 'Bhagavad Bhakti Rahasyam' as it advocates the 'Self-surrender' of the highest type as the best means of attaining 'Sadgati' or the final emancipation from this psycho-physical bondage of life. This Sadgati, he says, in the words of Sankaracharya, is the supreme Supramental feeling of a part of Jiva belonging to the whole or the Paramatman the Absolute in a unitary consciousness of the divine gnosis.

SRI SASTRIAR AND THE MAHARSHI

S. SHANKARANARAYANAN

Once I asked Sri Kapali Sastriar—"When I bow down at your feet, apart from getting your Blessings, do I not get the Blessings of Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo at the same time?"

"Of course, you do," affirmed he in his characteristic way.

The three mighty rivers of spirituality rising from these three fount heads of this century, inundating and vivifying this land with their divine waters of grace, had their confluence in Sri Sastriar.

Sri Visweshwara Sastri, the father, taught Sastriar Sanskrit, launched him in the *adhyayana* of Sama Veda and initiated him into the cult of Sri Vidya. As a result of his intense Mantra Sadhana over the years, he found his Guru in Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni—Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri—Nayana, as he was affectionately called by his disciples. Nayana led Sastriar to Sri Ramana Maharshi. The Maharshi's spiritual influence on Sastriar paved the way for his finally taking refuge at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

To quote the words of Sastriar himself: "Vasishtha Ganapati Muni—, Nayana as we called him—was of course my Guru. In fact, I looked upon him as my God. I looked to him for help and he always responded. But when it came to giving me the needed turn for delving into the depths of

the spirit, he directed me to the Maharshi. I hesitated because I feared advice of renunciation etc. But after repeated hints from Nayana for four years, I approached the Maharshi (1911-1912) and what a meeting it was! The very first day wrought a remarkable change in my being and no amount of *tapas* or *japa* would have given me an indubitable knowledge of spiritual consciousness and a correct appreciation of the truth of spiritual life that the Maharshi gave me. In fact, I could not have come to Sri Aurobindo, if I had not got the faith awakened in me in the spiritual life which I got from seeing Sri Maharshi.”*

As the disciple of Nayana, the foremost of Sri Maharshi’s disciples, Sastriar came within the aura of the Maharshi’s personality and influence. Thus Maharshi became Sastriar’s Parama Guru, the Guru of his Guru. But Sastriar, with his characteristic spiritual honesty and utter sincerity of purpose could declare—“I met the Maharshi. The personal attraction was irresistible. But I found his teaching, too direct, *immediate*, seemingly simple, having no steps in between, that is, the starting point and the goal, at any rate not practicable to people circumstanced like myself”.* But his reverential attachment and deep gratitude to the Maharshi who had sown in him the seed of spiritual consciousness were beyond question. In his poem of praise Sri Ramananjali, an offering of Sanskrit verses to the sage of Arunachala, Sastriar calls

* The Maharshi—T. V. Kapali Sastriar.

himself as *ramaṇāṅghri sarojāta rasajña* one who knows the taste of nectar in the lotus feet of Ramana. Also, the Maharshi held Sastriar, as he held Nayana, in great affection and esteem. In fact, the Maharshi used to refer to Sastriar as 'Chinna Nayana' (Little Nayana). The understanding between them was perfect.

It is no exaggeration to say that those who want to understand the message of the Maharshi in its pristine purity have to drink deep at the fountain sources of Vasishtha Muni's and Sastriar's writings on the Maharshi.

The Maharshi's Tamil poem *Ulladu Narpadu* was according to Vasishtha Muni an epoch-making work. But it was in Tamil and could be appreciated only by those who understood the language. Ganapati Muni undertook to render it in the Sanskrit language so that it might reach a wider audience and find a permanent place in the spiritual literature of India. The result was *Sat darsanam* in mellifluous Sanskrit verses in the beautiful *upajāti* metre, which is a faithful rendering of the Tamil text and yet appear almost like an original composition of the Muni. Ganapati Muni's other work on Maharshi's teachings, equally famous and significant, *Sri Ramana Gita* records the instructions of the Maharshi on various subjects of spiritual importance in answer to ardent queries addressed by devotees and disciples. Both these great works of Vasishtha Muni have been put in proper setting by the learned commentaries of the Muni's illustrious disciple Sastriar.

Sat darsanam was composed by Sri Vasishtha Muni during his sojourn in Anandashrama, Sirsi, along with his disciples. As soon as the work was finished by the Muni, it was followed by the commentary *Sat darsana Bhashyam* of Sastriar who also was staying at that time in Anandashrama, along with the Muni. The importance attached by the Muni to his disciple's Bhashya is revealed by the letters written by Ganapati Muni from there to the Maharshi.

The letter of 7th April 1931 says: "Child Kapali has started his *tika* (notes) on *Sat darsana*. I have indicated that considering the greatness of the original text, the appellation, *Bhashyam* (commentary) only will be appropriate. Says Kapali, 'The more one studies, the more profound appears *Sat darsanam*'...In order to explain, the commentator has a lot of things to bring out. A lot of new light has to be thrown. And the work should not become unwieldy. Topics should not be left out, their importance has to be demonstrated. Child Kapali can bear all this burden quite ably provided a ray of the peerless glance of Bhagawan is there".

In the letter of 28th April 1931, the Muni wrote that 'Kapali's commentary written so far is replete with an uncommon beauty.' And in the letter of 1st July 1931—"The commentary of child Kapali gave me special satisfaction. I trust that it will touch the heart of Bhagavan as well".

On 30-7-1931, when Sastriar arrived at Tiruvannamalai the Maharshi said:

“இப்பொழுதுதான் ஸத்தரிசன பாஷ்யம் படித்து முடித்தேன், நீயும் வந்தாய்”.

(Just now I finished reading Sat darsana Bhashyam and you have come).*

The commentary on Ramana Gita, *Ramana Gita Prakasha* verily throws a flood of light on the philosophical concepts and spiritual import that are embodied in the grand teachings imparted by the Maharshi. One of the important chapters in the Ramana Gita also contains Sri Maharshi's answers to Sastriar's significant questions.

Both the commentaries, one on Sat darsana and the other on Ramana Gita, written in charming Sanskrit are refreshingly original marked with rare clarity and profundity. Here Sastriar is at pains to prove that it would be a great injustice done to the Maharshi, if he were to be treated as one of the wise men India has produced and his teachings nothing but a reiteration of old previous systems. Says he in his Sat darsana Bhashya:

"It is needless to say that this *Shāstra* is not intended either to refute or to support the current systems, such as the Saivite and the Vaishnavite, the Dwaita and the Adwaita. It does not follow the method of metaphysical systems of the Sutra period. Nor does it purport, like the two *mīmāṃsas* of Jaimini and Badarayana to harmonise and to remove doubts or misconceptions in scriptural texts or other authoritative utterances of great souls. Like the sacred words of the Tamil Veda of Saint Nammalwar or of Manikya Vachaka and like the texts of the Upanishads, the words of the Maharshi

* Collected Notes and papers of Sri T. V. Kapali Sastriar.

are an original and independent utterance based upon personal experience, and though they support and elucidate authoritative pronouncements both of the scriptures and of exalted souls, they have really an independent origin and validity, coming as they do directly from himself.”

The third commentary of Sastriar in Sanskrit, *Arunāchala Pancaratna darpaṇam* is verily a mirror faithfully reflecting the glory of the five gems on Arunachala. The Maharshi did not know the intricacies of the Sanskrit language and its poetics. But at the request of Nayana, the *Arunāchala pancaratna* welled out from his heart in beautiful Sanskrit in the form of well chiselled Arya verses. Knowing the importance of the cardinal teachings of the Maharshi embodied in the verses, Nayana wanted to write a commentary on the exquisite pieces. But it was not to be. His illustrious disciple Sastriar fulfilled the desire of his Guru in writing the commentary, *darpaṇam*.

All the three commentaries were submitted to Bhagawan and were accepted by him. Sat darsana Bhashya was done under the direct inspiration of Nayana and the grace of the Maharshi. Sastriar's article in English 'Dedication of Ramana Gita Prakasha' gives a graphic account of the Maharshi's approval and acceptance of the commentary Prakasha and his unfailing Grace towards Sastriar. The Darpanam was published in 1943 by Sri Ramanashram as a significant contribution to the Maharshi's cardinal teachings. Sastriar himself translated his Sat darsana Bhashyam and

Introduction to *Ramana Gita Prakasha* into English and these have been published.

Under the urge of an inner development in Sadhana, Kapali Sastriar finally took refuge at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and followed their yoga. It is very significant that Sastriar's outstanding contribution to the propagation of Sri Maharshi's Teachings in the form of *Sat darsana Bhashya* and its English rendering, *Ramana Gita Prakasha* and *Arunachala Panca Ratna Darpanam* were written after he had definitely accepted Sri Aurobindo and adopted his Sadhana.

Sastriar could find no conflict in his conduct or ideologies—neither could his mentors. The Maharshi was a part and parcel of his being. To quote his words: 'The Maharshi is unique in the history of the world's saints. To have lived for full fiftyfour years after Realisation, to have influenced so many from his seat in one place, to have been accessible to all at all hours, to have stemmed the tide of secpticism as he did, is something truly unprecedented'*.^{*}

* The Maharshi—T. V. Kapali Sastriar.

SECTION TWO

SRI KAPALI SASTRY AND THE UPANISHADS

PROF. K. B. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

(Head of the Department of Philosophy in the Mysore University, Dr. Rao is an eminent philosopher and exponent of the ancient traditions, noted for his clarity and felicity of expression.)

A FEW WORDS

What prompted Revered M. P. Pandit the Secretary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry to invite me to deliver The Sri Kapali Sastry Centenary Lectures for the year 1985, I do not know. However, I gathered from him during one of the conversations at Mysore, that nothing takes place in the world but for God's dispensation. I believe this invitation is also one such. But I did not know, again, how much I was qualified to undertake the responsible task. Even before I could convey my acceptance, Sri Pandit sent to me four volumes of The Collected Works of Sri Kapali Sastry. Though Sri Kapali Sastry was not new to me, the books stimulated me to study him afresh, and that committed me to accept Sri Pandit's invitation.

Lecturing on Sri Kapali Sastry is not easy. A great savant like him needs to be digested for his views before one can speak on him. But the grace of Sri Sastry, coupled with the grace of his master, Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo took me along, and what you find here as Two Lectures on Sri Kapali Sastry are the result.

However, I have no confidence to vouchsafe what I have done is the best or true to Sri Sastry. The best that I could do was to take Sri Sastry's writings on the Upanishads—being the specific task given to me—and to introduce them to an audience who are practically interested in the spiritual work that Sri Sastry undertook, as well the Sadhana in which

he was involved under the illuminative guidance of Sri Aurobindo.

I have placed before you what, in my limited capacity, I could draw from Sri Kapali Sastry. Indeed, it has been a highly rewarding undertaking for me for it opened for me an angle of spiritual vision and experience the Great Sri Aurobindo Ashram has brought to bear upon the world. Sri M. P. Pandit made me participate in this joy, and I should confess that I am ever grateful to him.

I have only tried to put the intuitions of Sri Kapali Sastry in a way—call it an analytical presentation—that I feel will make readers more appreciative of Sri Sastry's yeoman service on the understanding of the Upanishads as 'manuals of sadhana'. Once again, I should acknowledge the kindness and encouragement shown towards me by Sri M. P. Pandit.

Manasagangotri
Mysore: 22.6.85.

K. B. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

LECTURE ONE

1. THE NEED FOR THE PRESENT OF THE VEDIC (UPANISHADIC) STUDIES—AND SRI KAPALI SASTRY

Listening to the inner nuances of *being* or life in essence, and seeing in the depths of one's heart the dynamics or the rhythmic dances of the continuous steps of the cosmic spiritual play are indeed a rare opportunity. This calls for an attunement of one's small personality to the cosmic band, a demand both natural and compulsive in terms of one's growth, not necessarily physical, but reaching beyond to the music of spheres of the supersensible illuminative spiritual existence. It amounts to be an 'event' or a 'happening' in one's life to be drawn or exposed, and to be transformed thus into the 'divine'. This is the logerthmics of 'revelation' called the 'Veda', which even in its gross literary form is the supreme elevating heritage of the whole of mankind. To associate it with an ethnic group called the Indo-Aryan is to underestimate its great value for life itself; and to restrict its appeal to a section of humanity geographically determined is to deprive for oneself the riches of cosmic experience of a blissful reality. To understand the Vedic revelation as the 'call of Heaven to the needs of human heart' is to see it in the right perspective, for it provides an entrance to participate in the experience, and to celebrate the glory and joy of a new birth of the small man into the truth and light of Purushottama or the Supreme Consciousness.

A vision such as this, is the gift Sri Aurobindo

bestows on the spiritual history of mankind, and specially on the resurgent India.

It is pointless to dispute the relevancy of and the necessity for the study of the Vedas, or to miss witnessing for oneself the wisdom of the primordial truths revealed therein for the remaking of the torn history of the cultural or spiritual life of mankind. In fact, devoted attention towards the scheme of cosmic consolidation provided by the Vedas—the Upanishads—is most urgent to-day, even as it was at any time of crisis in human life. The disturbances in life personal, social, political, economic, not to forget the religious and the philosophic are so evident, even as they are distressing. The outward 'growth' of civilisation should not be mistaken for an inner 'evolution' of man. The false identification of the modern material civilisation with the inner spiritual evolution has been the tragedy of modern life, and has alienated man from his own true self or being with the result all possible imbalances in the natural existence and functioning of beings, living and non-living, have taken away from man's life any kind of a 'light' or 'peace' that should mark a normal life. It is not to say, attention to this crisis was not paid earlier, i.e. in the past, but it is necessary to emphasise and evoke awareness to the presence of this soul-killing crisis at all times, and to bring this pain of being to one's conscious level, because we are prone to forget it in the artificial anaesthetic environs of modern civilisation. A forgetting of pain of this sort is no cure, but a salvaging of the soul from further

decomposition is urgently required. Spiritual visionaries and teachers had always taken up this mission, and their calls have always been significant. But degrees of difference in the perspectives and angularities have often driven mankind not to a united or integral fold in either giving priorities to values of life in its practical setting, or in placing before mankind a vision of reality that would help enrich life in its total expression and beauty. Should one estimate each approach as authentic, either on the rational basis or intuitive perception? What is demanded or expected is a sharing of the rich experience for a total vision (*darśan*) of the real, and a total fulfilment, for, the real itself is never broken but pulsates with equal vigour and equanimity in all its manifestations—finite and infinite, matter and spirit. ‘*Sarvam khalvidam brahma*’ is not said of a totality of disparate beings, but of an integral com-present existence whose beginnings are nowhere and ends non-existing. It is a spiritual radiance whose luminosity pervades in and through all participants in the play of the Infinite Being. It is to witness this freedom and to receive its immortal benediction, and to enjoy the infinite delight of one’s own being, the Vedas open out their invitation. The Veda demands a flowering of humanity into the sublime divinity—an evolution of a lower consciousness into a structural splendour of universal consciousness, which expands as it gathers up everything that itself throws up in its unending dance of supreme bliss. To be open to its fulfilment

is a divine opportunity, but to be blind to its illumination and joy is to die a miserable death: *andham tamah praviśanti ye avidyām upāsate*.

The need of the hour being so clear both for the individual and the society, and the denouement at the neglect of the call of the Veda being serious, one who could competently undertake to handle the situation of expounding the vision of the Vedas and the Upanishads must be extra-ordinary in perception and experience. Who could be better qualified than Sri Kapali Sastriar, the great sanskrit scholar, an adamant seeker after truth, and who had, more than all, secured the divine guidance, blessings and spiritual mentorship of Maha-Yogi Sri Aurobindo? It is in him we find a man upto his task. And so, it is in the fitness of things we try to know at least a little of this great savant, who has so much to say of the Vedic heritage.

Sri Kapali Sastry about whom, and about his Upanishadic studies in this direction, I am to speak, was a prolific writer, had unique contacts of the great seers of his age Sri Aurobindo, The Mother of Pondicherry, Sri Kāvayakantha Ganapathi Sastry and Sri Ramana Maharshi himself. Exposed from his childhood to the sanskritic Vedic culture on one side, and to those spiritual giants of great esteem on the other, Sri Sastry was an indefatigable authority in matters spiritual that India stands for. His life shows a direction in his spiritual *sādhana* or accomplishment of a high state of fruition by which he could himself be an authoritative guide in the



The Mother

matter to those who had the good fortune of exposing themselves to his influence.

Sri Sastry's contributions to understanding Indian spiritual culture have been comprehensive and deep covering the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Tantras etc. They reveal his extra sensitive perception arising out of his participation in the mythos (symbolised truth) and the logos (understanding) of what he purported to say either in personal discussions or discourses and extensive writings. For a superficial reader Sri Kapali Sastriar appears to reflect or draw his entire inspiration from Sri Aurobindo's vision and philosophy, but he is not bereft of original insights and interpretations of things he said. True to the vedic tradition, he acknowledges the authority of Sri Aurobindo whom he calls his 'Master' (Guru), but it does not make Sri Sastry a simple spokesman of the Master. He has been a creative interpreter and a daring explorer of spiritual fields under the illuminative grace of Sri Aurobindo (and the Mother). Here a distinction that may be made between the Master and the disciple should be appreciated in its proper spirit. While the Master's vision presents a functioning at the highest level of consciousness, called the Supramental, and so, naturally stands above the lay grasp of the untutored, Sri Sastriar's assimilative diction and rendering are fortunate and are easier to cope with, thereby we know where we are in our understanding without losing the divine touch of the Master's insight.

Nothing fills the heart and mind of Sri Sastry

as his deep seated reverence and inner drive to India's cultural heritage in all its shades and lustre, and the way it invites mankind to the actualisation in one's being of the dynamic Infinite and the utter possibility of living it in its wholeness and supreme felicity. It is discoverable, the fulfilment, that India's spiritual heritage wrought on the seekers of the past, and also the hope that presents even to the materially biased and psychologically torn moderner who is in search of his soul or God. Perhaps it is sufficient to record here that the relevance of Sri Sastry's writings is more than justified and needed for a wholesome intellectual appreciation of the broad spectrum of India's culture, and even for the personal discovery of the roots of faith in the destiny that deludes the unthinking multitude in its unabashed preoccupations.

It is pointed out that Sri Kapali Sastry presents many aspects of India's culture and its glory. But we are choosing, as dictated by the purpose of the present series of the Sastriar Birth Centenary Lectures, only his contributions to the understanding of the Upanishads proper, as an earlier course of the Lectures, I am told, has covered Sri Sastry's writings on the Vedas. However, an exclusive treatment of the Upanishads on which Sri Sastry has thrown light is impossible without perceiving the inner connections of the other branches. And so, I take cognisance of the relevant references in his vedic studies without which his handling of the Upanishadic themes would not get focussed.

In what follows will be discussed the basic

departures, his Master, Sri Aurobindo, has made in breaking through the mysteries of the Vedic symbolism couched in the Samhita, but not deciphered by both indigenous tradition and the Western Indologists with all their instruments of interpretation. Sri Sastry himself has devoted fully to organise the material and presented them in his *Rigbhāshya Bhūmika* and several other connected writings and discussions. But a clinching issue as to why the Vedic revelation (*śruti*) should itself have given scope to varied interpretations both philological and philosophical will be discussed afresh giving the much needed clue to the solution of the problem.

2. APPROACHES TO THE VEDIC STUDIES: TRADITIONAL
AND RECENT—AND THE CREATIVE/RENOVATIVE
BREAK THROUGH TO THE SECRETS OF THE VEDA BY
SRI AUROBINDO

The advent of Sri Aurobindo in the first half of the present century into the spiritual scene of India has been a significant turn in the resurgent life of the country. A new direction and vision in perceiving the country's spiritual heritage were provided exactly when the 'wild' West had begun to lay claim for itself in the techniques of unfolding for us the history of our past commencing from the Vedas. Their indological interests were not always honest and their instruments of study were not always sound. Whatever 'fundamental' work they might have done to explore for us our spiritual and religious antiquity or history was more of a

burying than of a revealing nature. This could be expected by any discerning authority, for a fundamental cultural difference was separating them from their correct understanding of an alien spiritual lore. To live a life of a culture is different from the one which sets for itself the position of a judge from outside, and with a coloured vision or a sense of superiority. They had come with a feed-back of the sciences of comparative religion and mythology which had not come of their age. Added to this three more factors contributed for bringing about an estrangement for an Indian to know his own past. One was the great antiquity itself of the sources of the Indian spiritual heritage, viz., the Vedas, and the loss of the connected tradition through the centuries. The second was the historical cum political factor of the foreign cultural/religious domination for centuries sapping out a real zest to maintain the purity of the tradition. The third, astonishingly enough was the very surviving yet a degenerated religious life both of the faithful and the lay which had lost all its enthusiasm related to the times as such. The nascent India which commenced sometime in the early part of the 19th century itself had its own drawbacks. Some significant attempts at reviving the past spiritual glory were lacking in penetration or inwardness or intuition, the primary necessity of the Age. The one exception was the mystic lead provided by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda towards the close of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. The rest of the country's 'awakening'

was that of the academic scholars, who had reasons—‘sufficient’ as they thought—to follow the guidelines and judgements of Western Indologists and Philologists. It was during this arid times that the advent of Sri Aurobindo took place as a phenomenon of great significance and fortune in the spiritual revivalism of India’s life. Imbued with a divine vision and proper intuition, he saw in his yogic states the splendour that was the Vedic Truth, and through his deep meditations on the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita, proclaimed the mystic or the esoteric character of the Vedic teaching, and laid bare the secrets of the Vedic symbolism of the mantras. His approach to the Vedas was thoroughly in tune with the requirement of ‘darśana’, the Veda, and so, he could decipher for us the symbolic structure of the Vedic language and its meaning, taking us back to the hallowed experiences of the Samhita seers and the Upanishadic sages. It will be almost a spiritual treat to go to Sri Aurobindo’s writings and to be lost in the charm of his expositions.

Wasn’t it a tragedy, then, of his times in the land of very great spirituality and high religious accomplishments that he had to fight for the restoration of the highest value of self-culture embodied in the Vedas? Sri Aurobindo had a formidable opposition to counter with both scholastic and modern, before launching on the renovative adventure and establishing the absolute validity and glory of the Vedic mystic revelation, and, through it, earning a respectability for India’s traditional faith in

the supreme culture of the ancient seers and sages. It is interesting to note the type of opposition he had to face, already obtainable before he came on to the scene, and during his advent, and of it, built against his own findings of the Vedic Truth and culture.

Sri Kapali Sastry recaptures for us some of the most significant positions which Sri Aurobindo had to contend, which are of both academic and spirituo-cultural interest. We find the focus thus:

a. That the Veda is a cluster of primeval, naive, and sometimes uncouth utterances or prayers of primitive Aryans, who had a crude sense of polytheism, guessing at a type of monotheism.

b. That the numerically many gods are at best allegorical attributes of one deity holding sway over others.

c. That the Vedas or mantras are sacrificial incantations of a primitive race giving primary importance to crude rites. The mantras or formulae composed mainly for the conduct of the rites in appeasement of the conceived gods.

d. That largely, building, upon the Brāhmaṇa interpretation of the Vedic mantras, the great Sayanacharya, was convinced that the Vedic religion was naturalistic; and so, the gods conceived in the Mantras were just spirits behind the natural phenomena at which the imaginative Aryans looked with wonder and awe, and to whom they offered oblations through varied forms of rituals in expectation, of gifts of material wealth and pleasure. Any implication of spirituality of the Vedic Man-

tras was accidental and not intended seriously, and if intended, to be only interpreted in terms of the ritual or naturalistic philosophy.

e. That instead of a cohesive structure, the vedic culture exhibited a heterogeneous ensemble of sentiments rather than an evolved philosophy of religion worthy of praise, for it was just a groping adventure in the religious path with as much crudity and naivety natural to the state of childhood in those matters.

f. That this is substantiated by the Vedic diction—an archaic Sanskrit—full of fanciful speculations on gods and spirits characterising an unsophisticated folklore, but not of a dignified systematic philosophical probing into reality, which only marks an evolved cultural state of any social group. This phase is only to be seen in the later Upanishads. Even the earliest attempt of the Nirukta of Yaska could at best be wavering about the definiteness of the Vedic spirituality as a front line development.

g. That generally speaking, on the methodological bases of comparative philosophy and religion, the Vedas do not exhibit any extraordinary state of spiritual development, nor do contain any mystery religion (as maintained by Sri Aurobindo) built on intuition rather than inquiry or philosophy, the latter of which characterised the Upanishads. That the Indian scene did not register a decay from the Vedic glory, but on the contrary, showed a gradual development from a childhood craving of the Vedic mind to a refined state of philosophis-

ing as is found in the Upanishads. This is evident in the general history of religious philosophy anywhere in the world.

Apart from many of the Western scholars, who had come with a mission of studying the origin and determining the nature of Vedic religion and philosophy, who could only arrive at such conclusions listed above, it was the greatest tragedy that even an eminent Professor like Dr. Radhakrishnan should have shared such views with the Western scholars, and to have adopted a position critical of Sri Aurobindo's, who showed through his works on the Vedas that the Vedic Samhita was mystical in character, and had developed a technique of its own through a symbolism rarely matched any where by which the seers had a concealed spiritual meaning for the initiate, and a worldly meaning for the lay or the uninitiate. He had showed that spirituality was not to be sold in the market, or made accessible for the irreverent and faithless. Only the serious take to the spiritual path and not the laity, and the former do not count in millions. This need not be elaborated. Sri Sastry has amply explained what Sri Aurobindo means when he said that the Vedic revelation marked a high watermark of great spirituality and piety.

For a sincere student of Vedic culture and tradition it should be a great concern of life to look for the answers that Sri Aurobindo's line provides, and so clearly and systematically placed by Sri Kapali Sastry in his *Rig Bhāshya Bhūmika*, a veritable, choicy and studied introduction to Sri

Aurobindo's spiritual forte. The misgivings on Sri Aurobindo's revelations are set aside in a craftsman-like spirit that even after one works upon it, if one were to have doubts about him, it would be a misfortune. It is possible to disagree with the typological philosophy that Sri Aurobindo puts forth in his later writings like *Essays on the Gita* or *The Life Divine*, but to dismiss as fantasy his Vedic Studies would be dishonesty to oneself. In fact, one can take other stands on types of Vedanta, which, however, will not affect the vision of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's main works on the Vedas and the Upanishads, and Sri Kapali Sastry's expositions on the main features of Sri Aurobindo's Vedic visions will be of great help in disabusing illwill on the type of spiritual philosophy he has founded. And specially, on the *sādhana* side, the great achievement of Sri Aurobindo in the form of Integral Yoga—the bringing down of the Super Mind to include, elevate and illumine the lower levels of existence: matter, life and mind, should not be missed at all. It is a point of departure that Sri Aurobindo has made where he has shown how the Vedic seers were found wanting—even with their profound discovery of the *Atman* or *Brahman* as everything—and how he has opened new horizons of experience: the descent of the Supermind to fulfil the aspirations for infinity of all beings unconscious and conscious.

But all this should have happened in the spiritual history of India is the main wonder, and perhaps we should look into the very character or

nature of the Vedas as 'revelation' for the occurrence of this wonder. Though this has been amply undertaken both in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and in Sri Kapali Sastry's *Rig Bhāshya Bhūmika* and other connected writings, it bears well to reiterate the way in which the Vedic revelation is to be viewed, and how a missing of it has led to consequences we have witnessed both in the academic field of Vedic studies and the religious life of the people who claim to be real inheritors of Vedic tradition.

Pertinent to the development of the theme a little elaboration of the nature of Vedas as 'revelation' variously called '*darśana*' and '*śruti*', may not be out of place. This too, not being opposed to Yaska's judgement of the Veda as embodying the *adhyātma* (besides the *adhibhautika* and *adhi daivika*) is not out of point.* This elaboration, though appearing as a digression, will no doubt lay a foundation to the understanding of the Upanishadic Sadhana, which Sri Sastry has made a subject of his study in *The lights on the Upanishads*, a consideration of which will be our preoccupation in the Second Lecture.

* That the later Vedic Brahmanas and the Purva Mimamsa, following which Sayana, should have made capital of the *adhidaivika* and *adhibhautika* aspects of Vedic revelation, and reduced the importance of the primary aspects of *adhyātma*, has been unfortunate. However, the Vedantic systems generally, and Sri Aurobindo in particular, have taken decisively on the *adhyātmic* line of the interpretation of the Veda, contrary to the ritualistic system, is significant.

3. THE MEANING OF 'REVELATION'—WHERE WE CATCH IT OR MISS IT

There are two stages at which 'revelation' may be found. One as a purely 'spiritual' event with no touch of temporal history. It is a 'God to man' or 'Truth to man' communication. It is an inner experience of man, when the life-throb of man sets itself in tune with the divine throb or rhythm and *totally* receives the illumination unhampered either by mind or reason. One hears, as it were, the voice of God with such clarity of accentuation that an automatic or spontaneous resonance takes hold of man's expression-system issuing forth as a 'sound-illumination' (*cit-śabda*). It is the transcendental reality disclosing itself, mentioned in the Veda and the Tantra as 'parā'. The subtle level of the transcendental sound (*parā vāk*) is seen inwardly (*paśyanti*) as an energising power (*prāṇasya prāṇaḥ*) and taking up a syllabic form (*madhyamā*) and issuing forth into the infra-sonic sound (*vaikhari*). This last is not yet alienated from the *Parā* or the Fundamental Transcendent, for it is still not sonic or gross, and is the most proximate expression of the Inexpressible (*avācya vāk*) (*varṇātmaka śabda*) uncontaminated yet by a social or sociological interpretation. It is as pure as the original, but soon shaping itself into the sonic or gross form and getting defiled by gross diction (*dhvanyātmaka śabda*).

This is the second stage when the word gets through a crude (or cultured) language and meaning enters the limitations and distortions of history, human commentary or interpretation, which

would be virtually 'exter-pretation'. It is at this level, the *vaikharī* gets alienated from the *Parā*. It is now the physical audible sound proper (a *vikāra* of the subtle *vaikharī*).

The search for the meaning of the Transcendent rhythm of the divine being, and its co-ordination with the purest meaning and expression of the *vaikharī* (i.e. in its pre-sonic form) is the real task of *sādhana*. For, the first stage of the prehistorical or pre-sociological stage of the identity of the *Parā* and the *vaikharī* is still 'symbolic' and creative' hidden in the esoteric vesture, and the deciphering of it is hardly possible. This is the meaning of the hiddenness of the statement: *ṛco akṣhare parama vyoman...** But when it enters the historical, it loses its divine purity and assumes a relative form. i.e. relative to the language-system of the human being, a historical event. Can one get off this tiger or the historical or socio-cultural meaning and jump back to the pre-existential pulsation which has been the root or source of the entire existence? Our failure in this regard is evident, and the symbol goes on 'concealing' the 'revelation', as we look out from our empirical or etymological meaning or semiotic analysis.

'Revelation' and 'concealment' are related. They always go together, but not even as parallels

* The one who does not know that which is *meant* by the Rik=Veda, is wasting his time by simple recitation. The thing which is meant, and in which all possibilities of expression (diction) rest, is the Transcendent Akshara Brahman. Rig. Veda I, 164, 39.

if not as tangents! This is the 'mystery' which deludes our analytical acumen in deciphering its native meaning. How? The revelation seeks a symbolic expression and so is *concealed* in it! until one gets into the pristine condition of the symbolic revelation the concealment prevails. And so, the mystery bewilders the unattuned or uninitiated. The outer mould or mode of the symbol, now a *word*, is in a defiled state and is virtually an 'extra-*vaikharī* (i.e. *vikāra*') and is already deep down in the mire of the material structure (as sonic-sound) with which everyone of us is normally operating. What we are doing here is an act of squeezing a cane (sugar cane), and what we may get is not the juice ('*rasa*'=*soma*) but only the pulp. Our exercise is simple madness and we beguile ourselves as knowers of revelation, and beguile the gullible too that we are passing on the revelation, the '*soma rasa*'! *Yastanna veda kimṛca karishyati* (he who does not know this—secret—what can he do with the Veda?) Rig. Veda I, 164, 39-b.

There is a point here to be distinguished. The revelation at the level of *Vaikharī* (the presonic-sound-syllabic form) is purely spiritual, and is not yet material. It is usual in the *śāstra* to distinguish between the 'unstruck sound' (*anāhata śabda*, the *madhyamā*) and the 'audible' one (the *vaikharī*). Where the non-knowers mistake, is exactly here. What the *śāstra* says as '*anāhata*' and '*āhata*' *vaikharī* are both non-material. There is an *āhata* in the *anāhata*, and an *anāhata* in the *āhata*! And if ever the physical ear drum catches its vibration it gets

blasted! It requires a special resonance chord and an ear. The Vedic revelation from the *parā* to *anāhata vaikharī* in the non-sonic form is the spiritual 'vijṛmbhitā' the full vision of the elemental grandeur of the principle of Transcendent Creativity, while the sonic *vaikharī* is a *vikāra*, a later manifestation as the gross universe with name and form.

And so, mistaking the *āhata* literally, we place it within the structure of the material sound, say of any thing coming out of vocal chords or a gong. A physicist dealing with 'properties of matter' should be well within his limits and should not identify the sound waves of the human voice, or of a metallic gong to be the same as *āhata* of the subtle state, we have indicated. The linguist's meaning of *śabda* is degrees removed from the *anāhatā-āhata* complex wherein the *vaikharī* has a subtler aspect than its *vikāra* aspect as the sonic or audible speech. (The *Sphota* occurs at the *anāhata-āhata* subtle level and manifests as the grosser sound and meaning we can hear and make.) While the subtler rests in the spiritual realm where an expression i.e. the *Para* and the subtle *āhata* (*vaikharī*) are *identical* and *not alienated* from each other in rhythm and luminosity, the grosser i.e. the *vikāra* aspect of the *vaikhārī* is the physical sound gathering the mass of empirical meaning to be conventionalised with reference to a gross object. This is the significant departure from the common understanding, and herein lies the cue for calling 'veda' as 'śabda', ordinary language word as simple

‘word’; and calling one a ‘yogi’ and another a ‘philologist’ or a ‘scholar’. While the former is inherently competent to decipher the symbolism of the Vedic śabda—which ceases to be mystery to him—the latter weaves a story inauthentic in itself and far from the truth. While the first has a *mantra siddhi*, and so really is a ‘*mantra dristah*’, and ‘*satya śrutah*’ the latter is a sophist, a pretender, a linguist, who like a cashier at a bank deals with coins not his own.

With regard to revelation (Veda) and its four dimensional state of being cum expression

Catvāri vāk parimitā padāni tāni
vidurbrāhmaṇā ye manishiṇaḥ |

Guhā trīṇi nihitā nengayanti
turiyam vāco manushyā vadanti ||

(Rig. Veda I. 164.45)

a question may arise, and of a general nature, viz. whether the mundane words are also born of *Parā*. For, nearly all of them do not bear witness to their being born of *tapas* or *darśana*. It is here we must draw a distinction between a spiritual or an esoteric word and an ordinary one. As we can distinguish between philosophical words/problems and ordinary words/problems, so we should be distinguishing a ‘vāk’* (meaning, one which is specifically

* Four are the dimensions of *Vāk*. Those men of understanding, moving at the supramental level know them. Of the dimensions, three are hidden in secrecy, and are not known to ordinary men. They use words of the fourth level.

referring to a transcendental truth, its perception and vibration, i.e. *dr̥ṣṭi* and *śruti*) from the ordinary ones, which are picked up in daily transactional life for the most limited purpose of ordinary life.

The ‘catvāri vāk’ (the four dimensions of the Transcendent word or sound) is thus specific and significantly technical and sacred. Normally we are dead to the unperceived (*adr̥ṣṭa*), unheard (*aśruta*) aspects of the sacred word. This is also true of the *mantras* repeated by rote! They are reduced to ordinary coins of usage. Their lustrous spiritual significance is lost by this pollution, as it were. Instead of being ‘śruti’, it is now reduced to ‘apaśruti’; it becomes ‘aparā’ and not remain ‘parā’, which only the rishis see and hear. It is in this sense the real Veda, which is *śruti*, is *Parā Vidyā* — the perceptions and hearings of the *Parā vāk*: the luminous sound symbol of OM. The Veda describes the ‘luminosity of the *Parā vāk* [thus: it is a brilliance of multidimensional or infinite scale, flowering in a manifold splendour and invoking a thousand fold meaning.’ (Rig. Veda I, 164, 41).

For a yogi who has seen this light and spirit, one step more is open, but is closed for an ordinary linguist (or a linguist-analyst) or a philosophical semiotic. It is in this different capacity of a unique personality of the attuned, the link is established between the sensible material word and the three subtle expansions of the *Parā Vāk* viz. *paśyanti*, *madhymā* and non-sonic *vaikhari*. For him the *vaikhari* of the spectromatic sensible or material manifestations are transparent, in the sense, their real struc-

tural roots in the unseen unheard sources are visible. And so, the gross is not gross for him, the material baseness is not materially brutal but stand before him as open gates of communication to the Transcendent. His awareness or awakening is so much infinitised that he can move backward and forward—from the worldly sensible to the spiritually hidden, and the spiritually potential to the grossly opaque. The horizon of understanding is endless that the inner truths of cosmic consolidation are as clear as day light. For him the ordinary instrument of philology gets a new glow and is transformed into a gnosis, laying before him the inner brilliance of the outward spoken word; and the objective denotations of it do not cause distortions in being *vikāra*. That is, he can move from the objects to their root sense, and from the root sense to their objects with such ease and intimacy that between them there is no 'secrecy'. Or a word/object becomes a symbol hiding no secrecy, that where the non-yogi is confined to only the material meaning, the yogi finds an easy passage from the material to the spiritual. Its full meaning glares into his eyes. Has not the Veda declared:

“He who sees sees not, if he does not know the meaning of the symbol. He who hears does not hear for his ears are blocked by the wax of misunderstanding. But LO! for one who sees the light of the Truth, it is like seeing his lady in her natural form of pristine beauty with no secrets hidden or to hide.”?

(Rig. Veda 10, 71,4)

That was the exhilaration with which Sri Aurobindo announced 'Eureka!'. The 'yajña' was no longer, for him, the outward ritual, but the Cosmos in action, including the individual participation in it and celebrating it in the act of cosmic consolidation; 'agni' no longer the outward 'fire', but the 'divine will' or 'force in humanity'; Indra is the 'illumined mind', and his two 'horses', the 'two energies of the mind'; the 'cow' no longer the 'quadruped' but the 'inner light' or 'divine knowledge'; the 'steed' no longer the 'horse', but 'divine energy'; the 'fruits of the sacrifice' are no longer the 'gifts of cows and horses', but 'mental illumination and abundance of vital energy'; 'soma' no longer a 'plant' or an 'extract', but the Lord of 'divine bliss'. The word OM is no longer to be sonically analysed into vibrations, but the 'three vyāhṛtis', nay 'seven vyāhṛtis' (the planes or universes of spiritual consciousness) in and through which the gnosis shines and experienced as forms of existence (*Sat-cit-ānanda*, *manas*, *prāṇa* and *anna* etc.) Not only the psycho-spiritual entities are revealed here symbolically, but the objective correlates identified. Each is real, and the real hides the real! *Rtena ṛtam apihitam!* as the Veda says. However this hiding is no hiding for the gnostic philologist, but for the ordinary one it is '*ajñānena āvṛtm jñānam*', as the Gita says. If one were to proximately identify the technician who rises to the occasion, in cases of deciphering esoteric symbolism, he is never a philologist, but a semeotic who is a gnostic too. For, the former may just swim

at the fringe of the ocean daring not to dive deep into the ocean of the mystic knowledge to find therein the root meanings of esoteric symbolism.

If one were to understand how many in a culture could well be exposed to this gnostic-semiotics of deciphering religious symbolism, the doubts and questions raised about the position maintained by Sri Aurobindo, that the vedic people had achieved a high level of spiritual perfection, would simply fizzle out, even at the *prima facie* level. For, none can uphold or authenticate to the spiritual elevation of the *whole group* of the Indo Aryans. There were extra-ordinary geniuses who could easily take to the sea of esoteric mysticism with a full gained equipment, whose number cannot be in millions, but in double or triple digits.

This is one of the reasons—and a good one at that—why a symbolism, though is a means of revelation by myth or allegory, is and will continue to be a ‘concealment’ even for the masses historically contemporary with the geniuses. In one way, however, the lay million, without being conscious of their cosmic purpose, would be ‘carriers’ of a tradition full of symbolism—just like we, ordinary men, carry on the Vedic recitation without knowing its inner meaning or outer symbolism. We are only carrying within our blood stream a certain group of blood only to be given to those who *can* receive it. The lay are the transmitters of tradition by rote, but who are themselves incompetent to know what they are carrying for posterity. The Vedic method of committing to memory and chant-

ing out is itself symbolic. Its use is never realised in its essence and so gets into the rut of dogma or a formalism, unauthentic in meaning and reference. But Lo! if one single individual is responsive to the inner impulse of the gnostic light, we jump at him, and he 'sees' and 'hears' it. It is a mistake we commit in bringing the time factor and maintaining that 'revelation' is always of yore, and that it has stopped now. It is really continuous, yet not historical in a temporal sense. Through the hidden symbol, but largely passed on as undeciphered, is still continuous and there could be no break in its immortalising benignity. It strikes down as a lightning at the instance of a conductor, and a seer is this *instant*, and revelation is an *event* or *happening*. Both such instances and events are not historical from the time scale, but do make the 'history' of the life of a nation or people.

It is thus we should understand Sri Aurobindo's advent and declaration that the Vedic Aryans were a highly or spiritually elevated people. He did not decry that the later development is a 'fall from grace' or authenticity. In fact, his main objective was to link the earlier with the later 'events' of the upanishads as one of 'continuous' rhythmic chore of a spiritual celebration, and practically saves the Upanishads of their philosophic grandeur and fixes their exact structural relationship with the authentic tradition of the Vedas. This perspective is much forgotten, to the utter loss of genuine 'vedic-ness' of the Upanishadic Vedanta, of which any Vedantin can be proud.

Incidentally, looking at the 'tapas' of the Mahā Yogi, Sri Aurobindo, and his pronouncements of the esoteric meanings of the Vedic Gods and Goddesses and their places, functions and purposes concealed in myths and symbolism—a transforming circumstance in any serious student—one wonders how much Sri Aurobindo was himself a seer of the Vedic order—an 'event' in the continuity of the tradition of revelation through whom Veda 'instanced' itself as continuous. This is the way Vedas are to be taken as 'sanātana, not 'ancient' but always 'new', keeping up a freshness far different from a historical rebirth.

LECTURE TWO

SRI KAPALI SASTRY AND THE LIGHTS ON THE UPANISHADS

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Four magnificently edited and published volumes (the fifth is to be released soon) presenting the writings and discussions of Sri Kapali Sastry are a fitting tribute to the memory of the savant. They provide the source material to estimate how a keen mind like Sri Kapali Sastry reacted to the major spiritual and cultural impacts he had in his life from his younger days upto the times of his 'close encounters' with the spiritual giants like Sri Kavya Kantha Ganapathi Sastry, Sri Ramana, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother of Pondicherry. A devoted student that he was of the spirit of the Hindu culture and philosophy, he has left for us invaluable contributions on the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Tantras, the Bhagavadgita—let alone his interpretations of the great Masters he met in his life. The foremost contribution, perhaps, of Sri Sastry happens to be—arising out of his spiritual participation in the wisdom of the Maha Yogi Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—the exposition of Sri Aurobindo's position regarding the greatness of the Vedic or the Samhita and its mystic cum symbolic character. The revolution in Sri Aurobindo's thinking and the follow up for elaboration by Sri Kapali Sastry needs to be emphasised. His contribution in this direction is recorded in his *Siddhānjana*, a sanskrit commentary on Rig

Veda (first Aṣṭaka), an Introduction to the Rig Bhāshya Bhūmika, *Tattva Prabhā* or the Lights on the Fundamentals. This is only a summary account of the main features of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Besides there are elaborate essays on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Sastry's place among the direct disciples of Sri Aurobindo is second to none, and has an authenticity which can only be had due to the exceptional personal contact he had with the Mahayogi. Sri Sastry had the life's gift of the Master's grace by which he could capture within him, a felicity all too distinct in abundance and clarity, with the result we have from Sri Sastry an authentic version of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and Philosophy.

2. THE UPANISHADS—AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE VEDIC WISDOM

It is the purpose of the present lecture to deal with one of the major contributions of Sri Kapali Sastry viz. the Lights on the Upanishads.

Any one who takes up the book without the orientation of Sri Sastry's thinking, or more properly, with a background of the usual ideas prevailing of the upanishads as philosophical treatises of the highest type reached ever in all the Vedic thinking or history, would find it cutting a different path. For, from the beginning till the end Sri Sastry's mind is pre-occupied with unlocking the symbolism of the upanishadic 'vidyās', or with the motive of telling that the upanishads besides being

philosophical discourses are fundamentally *manuals of sādhana*, which the Vedic samhita expects the aspirants to follow in their pursuit of the highest spiritual goal. The work, the Lights on the Upanishads, really begins with the last two chapters. The last but one opens out the doors to the understanding of the rest of the work. When one enters into the spirit of Sri Sastry's style of thinking and the method of handling the material taken up for individual study viz. the *vidyās*, the book turns out to be a very precious document for a spiritual assimilation.

In the course of six brilliant discourses (the seventh being the summary of all the previous ones) Sri Sastry introduces us to as many as six 'vidyās'—the Bhūma, the Prāṇa, the Shāṇḍilya, the Vaisvānara, the Nāchiketa and the Madhu—occurring in three of the major upanishads, the Chāndogya, the Katha and the Brihadāraṇyaka, and provides us with the keys to unlock the mysteries of the Upanishadic sādhanas. We have attempts made earlier by scholars* to enumerate the number of Vidyās mentioned in the Upanishads, the Brahma Sūtras and the commentaries, running upto thirtytwo to thirtyseven Vidyās. But this aspect of enumerating is no pre-occupation with Sri Sastry, nor the purpose behind his elaboration of the chosen vidyās the same. He has selected a difficult path of going deep into each of the vidyās to show how they

* The Thirty-two Vidyas: K. Narayanaswami Aiyar, The Adyar Library & Research Centre, Adyar 1916.

record the inner bond of the samhita of the veda and the upanishads, which speak of them. He has an ecumenical methodology of drawing in sources spread over the samhitas, the brāhmanas, the upanishads and the vedic and the upanishadic commentaries to show that the one purpose of the time honoured vedas is not to be naturalistic or ritualistic or to be magical, as the great Sayana and the modern oriental scholars have assessed, but to be spiritualistic or *adhyātmic* in its highest sense; and that the vedas represent a stage of spiritual achievement of the highest order. Contrary to the general opinion held by many that the highest was only realised by the upanishadic thinkers, and they touched the apex of the Vedic wisdom, Sri Sastry, following the illuminative mentorship of Sri Aurobindo has shown in his study that the upanishads had the sole aim of showing that they are inalienably linked with the samhitas, and are only a continuation of the spiritual seekings and any of their achievements are structurally one with the intuitions of the Samhitas.

But how the upanishads gained rather an independent and special status, and a better one too, as the 'vedānta', than the veda samhita itself, can be a significant question raised, for which an answer is outlined in a short but a graphic way. This section marks itself as a historical reconstruction not on linguistic or philological basis i.e. whether the samhita reflects a more ancient or archaic form of sanskrit than the one found in the upanishads—the usual stand taken by evolutionists

of language—but is a reconstruction which restores the dignity and spiritual value of the samhita. The reasons for making the distinctions that came to prevail in later times between the samhita as *veda* and the upanishads as *vedānta* need to be noted. The first distortion, according to Sri Sastry, occurs with Jaimini, the aphorist of the Karma Mimāmsa, who for purposes of strengthening the voice of his exoteric ritual treated the samhita as preliminaries to Brāhmaṇas, the ritualistic treatises, thus creating an artificial identity of a 'Karma Kānda' of the Samhitas and the Brāhmaṇas. It was next left to Badarayana, the aphorist of the Vedānta Sūtras, to put the Arāṇyakas and the Upanishads together as source material for his theory of 'Jñāna Kānda'. This became a standard understanding for centuries down of maintaining a distinction between the Veda (standing for the ritual) and the Upanishads (standing for *jñāna*), and the elevation of the latter as peaks of spiritual achievements, an indispensable way of studying the spiritual history. Then came the Commentaries on the Upanishads and the Vedānta Sūtras systematising the Vedānta—the path of knowledge—as against the Veda—path of the ritual—a distinction so venerably maintained down the ages.

What happened in this career was unfortunate to the very heart of Vedism or *śruti* tradition, viz. the relegation of the Samhita to a lumber room of archaic stockpile, with no appreciable significance for a spiritual growth. The commentators of Vedānta like Sankara, and the later

commentator of the Veda viz. Sayanacharya, consolidated this position, with the result the modern studies of the Veda and the Vedānta struck to this distinction as the most rational and honourable way on any score. The Western mind found it to be very logical and understandable; and applied their tools of language, grammar and philology etc. to determine the 'antiquity' and therefore the 'crudeness' of the earlier Veda, the 'modernity' and therefore the 'refined' state of the Vedānta or the Upanishads. This 'evolutionary' technique appealed to recent thinkers also to be the safest standard for determining the historical portrait of the entire Vedic literature.

Sri Sastry points out: what passed beyond their comprehension was unfortunate, and it required the vision of Sri Aurobindo to restore the lost light of the Vedas, and to lay the foundation of a new line of historical cum spiritual reconstruction of the śruti-tradition. This was a heroic task—indeed a Promethian one, for by it the light or fire of the Vedic wisdom that was lost was brought back by the intuitive meditations of the Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo. It was made out by explaining the secrets of the Vedic symbolism: Not only the Samhita records a sense of spiritual realisation but also a technical perfection in the use of terms referring either to Vedic Gods or items of religious usage. Sri Sastry quotes from Sri Aurobindo: 'The Rishis put the substance of their thought in a system of parallelism by which the same deities were at once internal and external powers of universal Nature,

and they managed its expression through a system of double values by which the same language served for their worship in both aspects. The psychological sense predominates and is more pervading, close knit and coherent than the physical.'

The purport of this emphasis of Sri Aurobindo's discovery of the esoteric and mystic/spiritualistic character of the Vedic Samhita by Sri Sastry was only to make sure that the Indian understanding of its own past should not again get lost in the dreary deserts of philological fantasy and a naturalistic fallacy, as it were, but sail through the clear springs and streams of divine courses and sometimes even inundating the parched hearts of the spiritual aspirants praying for the immortal grace of wisdom and peace. Any honest and genuine lover of the culture of the land would certainly welcome this yeoman service which has a parallel in none other than the legendary Bhagiratha's *tapas* bringing down the sanctifying Ganga.

Before we attempt a detailed study of the Upanishads as manuals of *sādhana*, we may again highlight Sri Sastry's position regarding the structural and the thematic nature of the Vedic literature.

1. It is held by many modern western writers on the Upanishads, both Indian and European, that the Upanishads are a revolt against the Samhitas and the Brāhamaṇas, stating that these latter reflected crude stages of thinking propagating ritualism of a primitive type. Sri Sastry points out neither of these is true. The Upanishads form a natural continuity of the glorious spiritual visions and

realisations reached by the Rishis of the Samhitas, and any ritualism involved therein was symbolic and not literal. Instead of dampening the spirit of the truly religious and spiritual aspirant, the symbolism generated a challenge and aided spiritual growth.

2. The essential link of the Upanishads, at least those of the early ten or the classical ones, is to be sought in the mantras of the Rik Samhita.*

3. The Brāhmaṇas or what has generally come down to us as 'Karma Kānda' does not necessarily refer to the external, mechanical, formal ritualistic act, but to the inner spiritual *upāsana* symbolically portrayed. Nor the Samhita is a ritualistic introduction to the Brāhmaṇas.

4. The Upanishads as such should not be mistaken for exclusive treatises of jñāna, they are as well guides to sādhana, an aspect which is forgotten in an enthusiasm to extol them as the peaks of spirituality the Vedic mind had reached. Further, it is wrong to call the Upanishads as bold

* It is really astonishing that the author of a voluminous book: *The Vedic Experience, Mantra-manjari* (a work devoted to the study and interpretation of the *mantras* of the Samhita of the Veda), Raimundo Panikkar has failed to see the relationship of the Upanishads to the Samhita. He has this to say: "The Chandogya Upanishad, for instance, one of the most ancient and most important, does not mention a single Vedic mantra.." p. 15. *The Vedic Experience: mantramanjari*. Darton, Longman, & Todd, London 1977.

conjectures of a fantastic type, or as fabrications of the introverts. They indeed disclose truths that can at all times be verified provided one is practically inclined to undergo the rigours of Sādhana, the upanishads themselves indicate.

5. Oriented towards inwardisation and yoked to the object of realisation of the highest truth that an aspirant can go, still the Upanishads subscribe to the worship of the Samhita pantheon but treat the gods as forms of the Highest, while in the Samhita gods reign supreme in their places and with reference to their functions.

6. Either in the Samhita or the Brahmanas any apparently ritualistic act is an invitation to inwardisation, a seeking of the meaning of the word/ words beyond the metaphors into the spiritual semantics or semiotics into the coolness of the divine grace by effecting an upward supplication to the universal indweller, infinite in character but available at each centre of the throbbing heart. This is an existential linking of the individual with the cosmic and vice versa, the personal and the impersonal and vice versa, and the one and the many and vice versa.

7. Viewed thus what may be called one's piety or *tapas* or faith is a psycho (spiritio) response of the individual to the cosmic divine forces sustaining the micro and the macro under the unified field of the Highest Being's full awareness of the whole of being constituting a delight of being.

3. THE *Vidyās*—THEIR ESOTERIC NATURE
AND SYMBOLISM—THEIR METHODOLOGY OF
TRANSMISSION AND RECEPTION

The '*Vidyās*' symbolically refer both to what is to be known or realised, and to the means of attaining it. Though the Upanishads purport to carry within them the 'secrets' of the highest to be known, their philosophical discourses on the highest viz. the Infinite Brahman or Atman form only an 'approach' to the theoretical understanding of the goal through elaboration, argument, illustration and metaphor. All this constitute one aspect. The other is the actual traversing the course, which is the true aim of the upanishads but couched in symbolism, and requires to be deciphered and mastered. The difference between the two aspects is well put by Sri Kapali Sastry thus: 'One can understand mentally, appreciate, and in a way, assimilate the concept of *bhūma* (for example, in the Sanathkumara Narada discourse, in the Chāndogya), even allow it to dominate or recast the texture of one's mind. That has a great value for him, the mental being; for it infuses a settled illumined faith in the mind. But still that is no realisation; a brilliant concept in itself does not go far for a living experience of the truth that is conceived, however cherished it may be in the mind.'*

It is to give a living experience of the highest truth of being-consciousness-bliss that the Upanishads strive at. However, it should be noted that

* *Lights on the Upanishads*. p.5.

the vidyās they offer are not elaborated, and this, perhaps, with a definite purpose. For the ideal they aim at is not an ordinary one, nor is it to be treated as such by making it easily accessible to the non-eligible, i.e. to those who do not have any appreciation of the value the vidyās stand for. It is as though to test one's eligibility and earnestness the vidyās make use of a terminology which is ambiguously worded—the right meaning concealed behind what is expressed outwardly. As it is pointed out in the earlier lecture, the revelation is always concealed! But is such that it is readily available to those who go to it in *faith* as did Nachiketa, with *firm resolve* as taught by Shāndilya, and who have *dhṛvā smṛti* as Sanathkumara points out to Narada. Such are the most basic requirements of the sādhakas. Still it is not over.

When vidyās are mentioned they are just disclosed by one or two hints by the Acharyas, and the disciples had to proceed by taking the cues from them. This is very clearly brought out in the instance of Bhrghu seeking to know Brahman from his father Varuna. Sometimes the disciple had to go all on his own, provided he had all the required fervour. This is instanced in the case of Satyakama. And instances are not wanting when the waiting time was no factor at all to learn the secret. Indra had to wait for hundred one years for a course on Atman or Brahman.

The transmission of the vidyā to a disciple or the initiate who has the proper eligibility is oriented in such a way that the whole time of the



Sastriar with

pupil is to be devoted to listening, meditating, observing, discoursing and learning in close contact with a living embodiment of the truth viz. the Acharya. Some times the teacher never teaches at all but would give him an appropriate task in pursuance of which the pupil would have had the experience of the goal set by the teacher. The technique is to directly involve the student in the *tapasya* or spiritual *sādhana* that the whole truth will be his by the time the task is finished, as is in the case of Satyakama Jabala. The living example of the teacher used to be so satisfying and sanctifying that the devoted disciple learns the secrets in silence and participation. The aim of the Upanishadic transmission is not to make the disciple feel that he merely had the secret passed on to him as if it is a material object. One should get it as a direct experience, which only assures an indubitableness about the experience. A participated experience in a direct way makes knowledge an authentic one, and the disciple himself becomes a master of it in the lore of the secret knowledge, and the tradition of the revelation becomes strong and continuous. When it is a case of a disciple directly arriving at the truth under the benign grace of the teacher, the latter only formalises it as having been transmitted by him.

If personal eligibility and the rigorous method of transmission form one aspect of the vidyā, there is another which is unpredictable. And that happens to be the Divine 'grace', a special incidence of fruition in the life of the *sādhaka* when all his

efforts at sādhana would have come to an end pining for grace from above. And the grace descends as it were to lift up the craving soul for enlightenment or redemption. However, the grace is so precious and selective that the secret or the truth is revealed only to those whom it chooses. This appears to be demanding more than eligibility. It transpires to be a special occasion in the whole dynamics of realisation where the seeker is the sought and the sought (descends to be) the seeker! An extra-ordinary situation indeed, and symbolically we find the mystics giving expression to it thus: 'the aspirant's knowledge of God, is knowledge God has of Himself.' It is not, in this sense, wrong to say, 'even a successful prayer is not possible without God as spirit praying within us.' Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga emphasises this as nothing does that man awaits the hour of God, and he ascends only when God descends to lift him up. And it is actually the God who ascends involving Himself in a playful delight of integration of all existence. It is not an exaggeration, then, if the Kena Upanishad reveals that the successes and prides of men or gods are not their's, but those of God: *Atmanā vindate vīryam; ātmanā vindate amṛtam*.

The secret of the Vedic symbolism seems to be that we as existents share the divine qualities of *sat chit* and *ānanda*, but the density of matter and mind withhold us for a while, till the grace in the form of an āchārya or God Himself fills us with aspiration and leads us to the ultimate goal of a

fulfilment or *poornatva* in the Higher reaches of Superconsciousness or God.

4. SELECT VIDYAS UNDER STUDY

Sri Kapali Sastry has presented for our benefit a very discerning scrutiny of four vidyās from the Chāndogya:

the Bhūma Vidyā,
the Prāṇa Vidyā,
the Shāndilya Vidyā, and
the Vaisvānara Vidyā,

one from the Katha Upanishad, connected with Nachiketa; and one from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the Madhu Vidya.*

Sri Sastry has reasons for selecting four of the vidyās from the Chāndogya: 1. Of the vidyās mentioned by Badarayana in the Brahma Sūtras, the majority are drawn from the Chāndogya. 2. Of the dialectical battle among the Vedāntas, whether the highest Real is personal or impersonal, the Brahma Sūtras prefer to stand on the general position of the Chāndogya Upanishad and maintains the '*ubhayalingatva*' of the Real. This position is the

* Some Vidyās go by the names of the Achāryas, for they would have expounded them. For example, Shāndilya Vidyā. Some would go by the names of the pupils, for with their involvement they are revealed. For example Nāchiketa Vidyā, Bṛghu Vidyā. Sometimes the central themes of the Vidyās themselves will form the basis of the vidyās. For example, Udgīta Vidyā, Samvarga Vidyā, Bhūma Vidyā, Dharā Vidyā etc.

most natural and does not acquiesce to or compromise with any intellectual satisfaction that a system builder seeks. 3. And the Chandogya alone conforms to the universal experience of any Sādhaka at any age, for the Reality itself is many faceted and each type of realisation can be authentic in its own way that by the nature of its infinitude the highest Real meets the genuine aspirant at his point of excellence and height of his achievement. This universal appeal of the Chāndogya has its own merit, which other upanishads lack.

Before trying to know the secret of the Vidyās, their techniques and ideals, to know what Sri Sastry says of them is necessary. He is true when he asserts that the vidyās are many and the details of their methodologies vary, yet they point to the same ideal or goal, the Brahman, but reached from different paths or perspectives and levels of experience. One thing is certain of the methodologies too. That is, they aim at practical preparation for reaching the goal. Man's personality requires to be trained at different levels: the body, mind and spirit individually and collectively. To this end the various vidyās are directed, and it is interesting to study how the Upanishads conceal within themselves secrets of this training, relative to the specific aspects of the goal intended.

We shall approach the various vidyās discussed by Sri Sastry in this light and try to know succinctly what he has to say both of the methods and the goal.

BHUMA VIDYA

The first of the vidyās considered is the famous Bhūma Vidyā of the Chāndogya revealed by Sanath Kumara, also called Skandha, to Narada.

This is the knowledge of the Infinite Vast or Brahman. Its existence is unbounded and unaffected by any kind or consideration of finiteness either material, vital or mental. Its spirituality consists in being all and being everything. It is a single entity of universal being-consciousness-bliss comprehending all directional dimensions and transcending too. Stated negatively, it has none of a second to compel or confound it. It is freedom itself. It is such a fullness and perfection that whoever experiences this Vast has the consummation of his being, which can otherwise be termed delight of existence, for the very freedom of its existence is the very secret of its being *this*, *that* and all *that is*, and all *that would be* from the point of manifestation in space and time.

One who perceives this, or literally experiences, sees no death, no suffering, no pain. He sees only the Infinite, the Eternal Perfect Spirit ever existing. Him who is eligible by austerity, purity and steadfastness, Bhagavān Sanatkumāra leads to the other side of darkness, death and sorrow, i.e. to immortality, the Bhūma.

Sri Kapali Sastry has two points to emphasise. The first one is the essential eligibility or preparation for this state, and the second one is the significance of the personality of Sanatkumāra as a principle in the consummation of the sāhdana.

With regard to the first, the Upanishad itself

points out two qualifications: *āhāra suddhi* and *sattva suddhi* leading to what is termed *dhruvā smṛti*, which in turn enables the sādhanika to attain to the state of intuitive perception of the Infinite Vast, the Brahman.

Ahāra is anything that builds up one's body. For Sankara, the commentator of the upanishad, *āhāra* is the knowledge of the objects of senses, and *suddhi* is the purification of the mind that receives the knowledge of sense objects, i.e. the knowledge which is free from *rāga* and *moha*. This leads to the purification of the *antahkaraṇa* leading to steadfast concentration.

Following the intuitive mentorship of Sri Aurobindo, and picking up clues from the Upanishad itself, Sri Sastry points out that the essential elements constituting all food are fire (*tejas*), water (*ap*) and earth (*anna*), and when they go to make up the physical body, give out by fruition voice, life and mind (*vāk*, *prāṇa* and *manas*). These are the subtle substances or *dhātus* that make our being—and specially from sādhanika point of view—*vāk* is the power of expression of the creative subtle states of being, and *ap* is the life force at the basis of expression. Thus *vāk*, *prāṇa* and *manas* are the components of *Sattva* i.e. one's being.

But this is only one aspect of the *knowledge* of being, and the second is the practical one of effecting the purity of being, *sattva suddhi*. Here also, Sri Sastry has a definite view to maintain. He draws again from another section of the Chāndogya and says, the technique of effecting the purity of being

is to make offerings the components of one's being to the universal principle of life, the *Prāna*, the *Prānāgni* or *Vaisvānara*, the Universal Fire, which receives the offering and burns off its impurities or sins. That is any *āhāra* or food is to be offered to the Life Principle as a sacrificial offering, in which case alone, the required eligibility for further *sādhana* is effected.

Following this is the *dhrvā smṛti*, steadfast intuitive perception.

What the Upanishad is aiming to teach is an ideal which is the highest of the spiritual attainments, the *Bhūma*, the Infinite itself—which by definition and implication is anti-finite or division in being. While one's individuality is full of particularising acts of egoism, the real *sādhana* should enable one to rise to the highest horizon of consciousness when only the meaninglessness of egoistic knotting or exclusiveness is seen. The ultimate aim is the dissolution of the *hṛdaya granthi* the central knot of individuality or divided existence endearingly cultivated and fostered by the personal career-making emotions of desires and aversions. The ideal that is *Bhūma* and the individualising agent that is finite are never at home with each other. And so, the weapon the *sādhaka* should possess is the steadfast fixation on the truth of the *śruti* declaring *Bhūma* as the goal or fulfilment. In other words, the ordinary personalising memory, *smṛti*, should be transformed into the universalising *śruti*. The intuitive perception of this and unwavering fixation in it is *dhrvā smṛti*.

Though the Upanishad does not elaborate on this, or about these steps, but for just mentioning them, the secret of the Bhūma Vidyā lies in mastering them. It is only then, the sādḥaka becomes eligible for the highest realisation.

However, Sri Sastry is driving at something more, as a part of the esoteric or secret vidyā. Here comes the emphasis on recognising the principle of a Guru in the scheme, who may come either in the form of a God or a worshipful person. Such a person is Sanatkumara, without whose help and mentorship the sādḥana of Narada would not have been completed. He appears as the 'deliverer' leading the sādḥaka to the otherside of ignorance. Sri Sastry points out Sanatkumara is none other than Hiranyagarbha, who has a special function to do in the infinite scheme of the Real or Brahman. All gods are manifestations of the Highest, and each has a part to play at appropriate situations. Narada awaits this situation and Bhagavan Sanatkumara appears to take him on to the otherside of darkness to knowledge or immortality. The saint (Narada) who was in search of peace, in spite of his unmatched knowledge of things material, vital and mental, was lacking in the knowledge of the real spirit, the Atman (he says: *mantravidēvāsmi na ātmavit*), finds his consummation which takes him to the state of the Bhūma, the divisionless Atman.

As Sanatkumara leads Narada helping him on the victorious battle of the planes of ignorance, Sri Sastry points out, the Upanishad calls Sanatkumara by the appropriate name *skandha*.

PRANA VIDYA

The next of the vidyās, Sri Sastry discourses on is *Prāṇa Vidyā* of the Chāndogya. The immense potency or power of this vidyā is described in the upanishad by Satyakama to Goshruti, after the latter's initiation into the vidyā, thus: 'if one utters this even to a dried up stump, sure, branches would shoot forth and leaves spring from it.' If that is the case what to say of its mysterious creative efficacy when it is given to a deserving human being?

Goshruti receives *Prāṇa Vidyā* with all its subtle applications and methods of sacrifice. The implications of the *Vidyā*, obviously, is the realisation of the Life Spirit itself which creates everything and keeps them blooming.

Contrary to the misunderstandings that may be regarding the *Prāṇa Vidyā*, that it is just an accessory to, or a part of the *Brahma Vidyā* which is a major one, Sri Sastry explains that this *Vidyā* is *Brahma Vidyā* itself. For, the *prāṇa* mentioned here is *Mukhya Prāṇa* i.e. Brahman itself, not those which have smaller areas or planes of operation like *apāna*, *vyāna*, *samāna*, and *udāna*. The end of *Prana Vidyā* is realisation of the truth expressed in statements like *Sarvamkhalvidam brahma* or *aham brahmāsmi*.

Likewise Sri Sastry points out that *Prāṇa Vidyā* is not to be equated with *prāṇāyāma*, for this has a lesser objective and limited in scope. It is concerned only with regulation or control of breath a biologico-physical act, whereas *Prāṇa Vidyā*

being Brahma Vidyā itself refers to that state of the universal, Primordial Life Force 'breathing without breath' even as it is indicated in the Nāsadiya Sūkta: *ānīdavātām svadhayā tadekam*.

To rise to this pre-existential condition, the Upanishad formulates two stages. According to Sri Sastry we are to gather this being subtly mentioned in the Upanishad. One is to identify himself with *Akāśa*, and other with *Prāṇa*. Sri Sastry warns that neither of these is to be mistaken for the grosser or elemental aspects of space or breath. Both are to be taken as the Infinite Brahman. For the elemental ākāśa is bounded; without reference to objects it cannot be apprehended. The *Akāśa*, the Upanishad refers to, is the limitless *cīdākāśa*, the Universal Consciousness, or the *daharākṣa*, the Indwelling Consciousness i.e., Brahman itself. It is only the infinite self-existent consciousness (Brahman) which makes it possible (gives scope) for all the inner and the outer existents, including their revelation as existents.

Again, it is the same principle which makes possible all life to live, being the primordial pulse, a creative dynamis, behind the micro and the macro. This is *Prāṇa*, the upanishad refers to as identical with Brahman. One is reminded here of the Kena Upanishad:

yat prāṇena na prāṇiti
yena prāṇah prañiyate.

Not by breath it lives, but by which breath makes everything live. Such *Prāṇa* cannot be other than

Brahman. Sri Sastry points out that the individual soul, when it realises itself to be organic with this primordial life force, rises to the level and participates in the functioning of the supra-vital or the Supreme Life Principle, the All pervasive Infinite Brahman. What is gained or realised by Prāṇa Vidyā is this creativity natural to the state of being That, and in consonance with that ultimacy becomes creative even by a wish.

There is a significant aspect of such an identity of the individual soul with the Universal, Sri Sastry wants us to know. It is not '*laya*' or a 'dissolution' into the Brahman, but a 'fulfilment' or a '*sampatti*'. It is neither going beyond nor simple gaining of transcendence, but is an enrichment of life by a preparation that adorns the sādḥaka with an understanding and a capacity making him a joyful functionary of the universal life, with no dividing will of his own, but being identical with the one will and tapas of the Lord of the universe, the Iswara, giving a living touch to all that is perceived or contacted.

SHANDILYA VIDYA

Shāndilya Vidyā as is taught in the Chāndogya has an eternal appeal, is true in the context of Vedantic structure expounded; and has bearings on the most modern philosophies seeking the real man as well as his freedom, with a choice too.

This is not an extra-ordinary circumstance with this Vidyā only, but with all. But particularly the way it discloses the real nature of 'man', the

concern of the modern thinker, the Vidyā has an appeal which is so relevant. This we see.

The Upanishad is both knowledge of the highest kind and a manual of discipline making it possible for a living experience, the knowledge it intends. Shāndilya summarises his teaching in two significant statements: '*sarvam khalvidam brahma*' and '*tajjalāniti śāntha upāsīta*'.

Sri Sastry takes up the issue of man and his freedom on the basis of this Shāndilya sutra and pins on the method suggested in the Upanishad; the one who is an aspirant to the experience of this great truth should make the resolve (*sa kṛtam kurvīta*.)

What is the sort of a man who should make the resolve and to what purpose? It is always given to one to choose to be small, finite and mundane, and to have a will or no will to lead a life of the usual line of avarice, prejudice, and so, of the resulting pain and suffering or death. And it is also given to one to shed these attitudes and postures and to become somebody pursuing a greater goal with a greater aspiration. To such men inclined to higher reaches of life and value Shāndilya Vidyā opens out a vista of the Universal Person or Purusha, who is all existence and bliss. This is the real goal of man and towards achieving it is the *kratu* or will of a super kind directed.

Analysing the nature of man, the Vidyā points out that the real man is *manomaya purusha*, *prāṇa maya śarira*, *bhā rupa* and *satya sankalpa*. Sri Sastry, here, points out that the ordinary physical body of man shares with all physical bodies of living beings

animality, instinctiveness, lust, greed, etc., which at every turn of life makes the person or personality finite and mortal. This is not the 'body' of the Purusha, which the upanishad means. But it is of a higher order free from all finitude, i.e. impulses and wills which cripple the growth of the spirit. The spirit embodied in the mind, or the mind that receives the spirit (Purusha) is a consciousness which is illuminative and expanding beyond the structures of the vehicles in which it resides, and from where it operates. It is discerning in its career of manifestation, and so, the mental operations are not simply stimulus-response-bound. It is verily called 'adhyavasāya', by which at each moment of its career should be/is a reflecting medium of a spiritual life and grace or lustre. The person referred to is not the small one, but the Purusha of infinite dimensions, universal in character, willing only the truth and nothing short of it. So the Purusha is *satya sankalpah*. In consonance with this intuition, 'Kṛtm kurvīta' stands for making a will that is to be the will of the Infinite, the Lord. It is such a person who is really 'prāṇamaya' in the highest sense. That is, not to be simply limited to the bio-physical life, but to be taken as the Infinite Consciousness Force at the basis of all existence, or as the principle of Dynamis, energising all existence, or as a principle of illumination dissolving all darkness and ignorance which either falsifies or negates the significance, of however big or small existents may be, or as the bliss of existence which overflows all life with a warmth of sweetness and love. This is

the real Man, the Purusha, one aspires to be and wills to actualise. This is the state of the Infinite, of Freedom and of Life Divine.

Shāndilya Vidyā is thus a positive affirmation of being, life and value. It is a sanctifying knowledge that fills the heart of the sādḥaka giving him a feeling of immediate pervasiveness and nearness, and filling the mind with an unceasing awareness of the luminosity or spirituality of all existence. It does not absorb or lower the tune of aspiration but weaves it into the symphony of the music of the spheres.

VAISVANARA VIDYA

Occurring in the third chapter of the Chāndogya, the Vaisvānara Vidyā unfolds the mystery of the identity of the microcosm and the macrocosm of the oneness of the seeking self with the Infinite Purusha. The obsession of a division in being and of a reality as limited to our individual finite understandings, is proved suicidal and anti-truth. Any vision of Truth that we may comprehend in our limited capacities and directing our sādḥana to achieve it as the final and whole truth, not only is un wisdom, but even the fruits of realisation being ego-centred are self-destructive because therein the roots are cut away from the main stream or cosmic life and truth, which truly bestows the sustenance and energy to all life.

When in the minds of five aspirants (Prāchīna shāla, Satya Yajna, Indradyumna, Jana and Budila), the question: 'who is the *ātmā*, what is

brahma?’ (*konu ātmā, kim brahmeti*) occurred, it was really an introspection or a re-examination of the positions which they had held (Svarga, Sūrya, Vāyu, Akāśa and Ap respectively) as the answers, but which must have been unsatisfactory to them. And so, they sought light from a sixth (Uddālaka), who had also not arrived at a final solution regarding the problem. But true and earnest seekers all of them were, went to an authority in the matter, Asvapati Kaikeya, who really knew the truth as a whole and with all details. He bestowed on the seekers the right wisdom and impressed on them the dangers of wrong or partial perceptions of truth and attempts to realise them. Sādhana, it becomes clear here, is not simply knowing the truth correctly, but to be aware of the hazards that attend wrong pursuits. Asvapati enlightens them that the ‘truths’ they had held as final, were only *aspects* of a more comprehensive cosmic or universal life-force, being in all but transcending all. The key sentence that summarises the ideal of sādhana thus:

sa sarveshu lokeshu, sarveshu bhūteshu;
sarveshu ātmāsu annam atthi.

In all worlds; in all beings, in all selves, it is He (Vaisvānara) who eats the food. That is the universal Self, who by his spiritual fervour or heat fructifies, digests and enjoys and maintains all. He is the real Being, the Atman or Brahman.

The sādhana adumbrated here envisages an intuitive perception of several important problems connected with the spiritual nature of one’s self:

should one pursue the ideal that his self is the sole ātmā or sole brahman? That is, is it either of them, or both of them simultaneously in an identity? Or is it anything else? Or is it a 'part' 'aspect' of an Universal Self which transcends the finite dimension of one's small being that one ordinarily thinks of? As a part/ aspect of an Universal Being, is one's self a 'participant' in the universal life of such a being? And what is the glory of such a Universal Self or Life Force, and lastly, what is the secret sādhana that helps realise the truth and live it?

To such problems that beset the minds of sādhakas, as they did in the case of those sages who approached Asvapati Kaikeya, the latter's direct experience of the highest spiritual truth viz. Vaisvānara Atmā provides a comprehensive solution; and also in a satisfying way consolidates into a universal theme of realisation the individual intuitions and achievements of the aspirants who went to him.

Vaisvānara Atmā is the real Self of all beings, the thermal plant (fire) that burns within each being, and by whose cooking all offerings (food: material, vital and mental) are fructified and digested and converted into the sap of life. Being the Universal Fire kindling all life-centres in all beings Vaisvānara is the *one* enjoyer, the real one, in all the enjoyers. Being the infinite, he is the '*abhivimāna*' as the upanishad calls him, which means He is the 'measuring principle' of existence, the material, vital and mental, the small and the big, yet unmeasured by any of them either individually or collectively. Being

transcendent in this way, Vaisvānara is the Life Force on which all cosmic movements and functions take place in an order and system that escape measurement from finite visions, yet not entirely alien or beyond aspirations of realisation, for He is the thermal centre of each. To think of it, Vaisvānara is the nearest of the near (being the inner Self itself) and farther than the farthest, for He is unavailable to deficient or short-sighted approaches. On the canvas of the Vaisvānara, the Infinite, all manifestations are restored and find their meaning, their purpose and fulfilment also. Vaisvānara is the inner law governing the cosmic law to which all adhere, and by which all are sustained. He is simultaneously himself and any individual that may be. This is the law of the Infinite, hardly envisioned by a finite understanding. The calm, peace, harmony, illumination that form the centre of such an Infinite centre are so compulsive that like a single wave at the centre of an ocean creates all waves in the vast surface of an immeasurable sheet of water, and so transforming the vast existence of its being. Even so, the Vaisvānara transforms all existence, be it material, vital or mental and make them lose their opaqueness and rigidities, and their exclusiveness, and to shine with illumination of the spiritual reality.

Sri Sastry takes the cue from the explanation of Visvapati Kaikeya (that his kingdom was free from all individual and social evils, and righteousness was the order of the day) and points out how a spiritual attainment of his kind and stature

happens to be a boon on the environment, and how it will have a transforming and elevating influence. The whole surrounding is lifted up to a higher consciousness, peace, illumination and joy.* The sādhana that helps an achievement of this kind lies in the secret of 'sacrifice' of all that we think and do (mental or physical) at the altar of the Vaisvānara (Universal Fire) within us, and of the secret that by the very same act the 'serving' is universalised. To say in different terms the benefits are shared by all. In one's *real* living, all others live; in one's *real* bliss, all others enjoy; and in one's *real freedom*, all others are redeemed. It is their life, bliss and freedom. One transcends death and has his immortality. Physical death is no death, and physical individuality is not separative. The Self is Infinite and the enlivening Fire is not confined to a cell.

THE NACHIKETA VIDYA OF THE KATHA UPANISHAD

Sri Kapali Sastry's enquiry of the secrets of the Vidyās pinpoints that the Universal Fire, the Vaisvānara, is the fulcrum on which every sādhana turns. Katha Upanishad makes no exception in this. He shows that the Nāchiketāgni is the divine dispenser which opens up the gates for man of Heaven, and expands the stature of man's being by provid-

* We remember here Sri Aurobindo's conception of a Superman helping the spiritual evolution of mankind by his descent and presence.

ing a subtle passage through which the mortal being can move upward towards heaven getting divinised or move downwards again to the land of the mortals to work up a consolidation.

Analysing the three boons which Nachiketa gets from Yama Sri Sastry shows that they are not disconnected or casual in themselves. By linking the Upanishad with the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, it is shown that the Kathopanishad is nothing but an expansion of the theme of the Aranyaka and the three boons are integrally related, the second of the Knowledge of the Fire being the connecting link between the first and the third. Nachiketa himself is shown as the incarnation of the Vaisvānara Fire—he is actually addressed as such by Yama—who by going to the land of Yama already gets the answer for his own question of survival after death, and his getting the boon to return to his father is itself symbolic of the freedom he gets to move forwards and backwards between earth and heaven. It is about the third question Sri Sastry is much concerned, and the major portion of the discussion is devoted to it: What is that which survives? Is it the personal self or the self with individuality? Or the self with no particularity about it? It is the latter which is immortal, whether it is encased in a body or freed from it.

It is pointed out that there are three gains for the development and consolidation of sādhanā as implied in the boons. The first boon for sādhanā is the very encounter with the Lord of the Cosmic Law or Order, which in the normal circumstance a

human being cannot have, and by getting the opportunity gains a vantage view of what life and death are. This is a form of liberation from earthly nature and its rigorous control over mind and soul. The boon gives, however, a mastery over nature. It is an occult power over matter of mind and life.

The second gain out of the second boon is the secret knowledge of the Order of the Worlds other than the finite and the individual, for it touches the method of waking up of the Vaisvānara Fire within the individual as well as the Cosmos, the universes of matter, life and mind.

The third gain is the consummation of all sādhanā viz. the knowledge of the One, symbolised as OM, which is the source of all existence, of birth and death, of the individual and the cosmos mortality and immortality. By this knowledge all darkness about the mystery of life and being is dispelled and one shines by the Light of Lights, the Self Itself. This is attaining to the rock bottom of peace and harmony, the delight which constitutes the Truth, the knowledge of the Purusha. Sri Sastry emphasises that the Upanishadic message consists in that this knowledge is humanly possible, here and now; and that is, before one drops down dead. This knowledge, again, gives him power even to 're-embodiment' or 'manifestation' and even to create.

Katha has a message of sādhanā: Built on Sādhanā man can move from a lower state of consciousness to a higher one expanding the horizons of awareness of the inner dynamics of the

material, vital and the mental and stabilising oneself in the higher spiritual. The stature to which man grows has no equal either in men or gods, for he would have got the supreme felicity of the end viz. tranquillity or peace, the very being of Purusha, the Highest.

MADHU VIDYĀ

The last of the vidyās discussed by Sri Kapali Sastry happens to be the Madhu Vidyā, an *anga* or a part of the Soma Sacrifice, and forms a complementary of the act of preparation or '*pravargya*'. Madhu Vidyā is the secret knowledge which practically gives the sacrificer the essential physical, vital and mental power to make oneself fit for receiving the higher grace of Indra or the Lord of the three worlds to whom actually the *soma* (*madhu*) is offered. The Deities who are addressed and prayed for giving the necessary strength are the Aswins. In response, Madhu Vidyā is imparted by them to the sacrificer to complete the Soma Sacrifice. From the point of view of sādhana the *pravargya* is a material preparation and the Madhu Vidyā is vital and psychic preparation which takes the sādhanaka to a higher status, to a wider existence outgrowing the bounds of the normal mind and life. The capacity of the human being to realise the highest truth of the delight of existence being limited, can only be in need of a higher help, and this is rendered possible by the knowledge of the *madhu*=delight=the *soma* in all things of existence. If the assistance of the higher gods are not forthcoming, the human body and mind will burst like a

balloon which cannot withstand the gush of wind that enters it. The frailty of the weak minded and the weak bodied is emphasised here, so that the luminous light of the highest truth or the experience of its unboundedness or *ānanda* requires a real receptive capacity in the *sādhaka*. The Aswins are symbolic of the twin forces of life and psyche especially the nervous energy. Sri Sastry points out that they give youth to the old and health to the sick, and wholeness to the maimed. They are also powers of truth, of intelligent action and right enjoyment. They stand for the Vedic dualism of the divine powers: power and light, knowledge and will, consciousness and energy. Aswins are invoked for bestowing all this, with the result the path of the *sādhaka* is freed from the basic hurdles in the spiritual adventure—the march from the gross to the subtle, from the lower level of consciousness to the higher one of consciousness and delight, from the individual to the cosmic and super cosmic Godhead.

In the light of Sri Aurobindo's revelation Sri Kapali Sastry moves on and explains how the biune principles of the Aswins represent balance and harmony amongst the varied things of existence. He points to the inner implications of existence as not one of a monotonous uniformity but as one of a unity in diversity, and vice versa, as one in many and vice versa. The varied manifestations of the Universal Principle has a characteristic inner balance and composure, harmony and peace that in the vast extent of existence each is *madhu* (sweet) to the other. Discordance is not structural

to Reality. The Madhu Vidyā opens our awareness to this grand tranquillity that is the delight of existence, and the one who is lucky to obtain this awareness has his consummation of life.

5. THE RANGE AND CONSOLIDATION OF SĀDHANA—FROM SĀDHANA TO SIDDHI

Within the purview of the seven Vidyās discussed hitherto on the Upanishads, Sri Kapali Sastry has hinted at several modes of consolidation of sādhanā which would facilitate the sādhanaka to evolve himself to statures whose range spreads from the mere materiality to the super human/super divine levels of the Super consciousness. This is in keeping with the lines of interpretations of the Upanishads he has adopted under the spiritual guidelines of the yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo enunciates the main stages of sādhanā thus:

The starting point of sādhanā is man. But he is already—structurally—three degrees above sheer animality. In him are assimilated the three factors of cosmic existence: matter-life-mind. By divine dispensation he is the divine, now, on its descent to the human level but on the ascent towards the Supramental.

The first impulse at this stage is the gathering up of the elements he is made of, matter, life and mind, so that they cease to be isolated factors from the evolutionary scheme, and are operative towards the higher levels of Overmind—a conscious understanding of the present position and a con-

scious urge to rise higher—from life to death and death to life without being hindered by the stoppage of life at the doors of death, but a return to life after facing death. This is brought out in the allegory of Nachiketa (Katha Upanishad), whose gain through the first boon is a movement towards life from death with a survival of personality. The second boon of Svargāgni gives the occult power over the lower forms of life and death. But these, again, are only leads towards the third gain of immortality and bliss or delight of existence which the soul would attain with the realisation of the identity with the Ultimate Being, the Brahman, the all-pervasive and all-comprehensive Real, which always *is itself*, and simultaneously *all its becomings* or manifestations. It is a positive realisation of a fulfilment of being which is Super-consciousness, the Purushottama, the highest ideal now becoming the actual in the sādḥaka's life. This is the indication of the identity of the attainment of the ideal by the aspirant, when the sādḥana is consummated. The sādḥaka is verily the '*dhana*' (treasure), he is after. He is himself the end '*sa dhana*'. The descent has consummated in the ascent. Sri Sastry writes of this: '...the original creative Force of the Divine Being takes on the double movement of the Yoga Force of which the First and the Final sādḥaka is the Divine Lord Himself.* All existence is lifted up into the Brahman, the personal and impersonal Ultimate.

* Collected works of T. V. Kapali Sastry Vol. 2. p. 10.

Sri Sastry has traced this throughout the discourse giving hints as to how this is made possible. He chooses the Chāndogya Upanishad and the vidyās therein to tell us that the fulcrum is *Prāṇa Vidyā* or the Knowledge of Prāṇa as Consciousness, which should receive all attention of the sādḥaka. It is the *prāṇāgni*, the Vaisvānara, to which the individual should bring all his offerings the *anna*, *prāṇa* and *manas*. This would effect a burning out of the divisions built around the ego-personality and lead him on to universalisation of the spirit transforming all particularisations. It leads to the realisation that the Universal Fire, the *prāṇāgni*, or Vaisvānara is the one entity which works behind all beings as the moving dynamo keeping them go in the cosmic order and fulfilling themselves of the ordained tasks or functions in that order. The one who is a master of the *Prāṇa Vidyā* is so powerful that a simple uttering of the 'prāṇa mantra' can fill the whole cosmos with life even if it were dead, or can rouse matter to life and life to consciousness and consciousness to superconsciousness. That is, by an acquisition of creative power by a realisation one can fill up the cosmos with a surging dynamism, as he would have become the very Vaisvānara himself at that stage. He leaves nothing unrelieved, for nothing is useless for him. He becomes himself a cosmic player in the cosmic drama of the supramental divine. Only, the sādḥaka should not lose his grip over the steps of realisation he has attained viz. the faith that he has built up and structurally turned into his own being, followed by a

purity of mind now turned into an intuitive grasp of the Truth or Revelation, thus building himself into a fit vessel for receiving the supramental grace by which he is led beyond ignorance and death to gnosis and immortality that is the end. For one at this stage or level of evolution there is no rejection of the many or the material, but all in *one piece* is accepted as divine in a life that is divine—a reality that is sweetness (*madhu*) all through, a reality that is so near to all and at all times, so that a statement like '*sarvam khalvidam brahma*' is seen not as knowledge by description but as a declaration by acquaintance. It is a truism. The Self is in all, with all its glory and delight.

We would not be completing the task taken up for the Lectures unless we associate here Sri Sastry's reference to Sri Aurobindo's *sādhana* and his achievements over the ancients, about whom we read and know in the Vedas and the Upanishads; the relevance of this becomes clear at this stage when we have spoken of the *siddhi* and *sādhana* recorded in the scriptures.

There is no refuting of the fact that in the spiritual realm the seers of the Veda, including those of the Upanishads, had raised the human level on the path of divinity by their austerities (*tapas*) and aspirations towards a state of being beyond birth and death i.e. towards immortality, the *sin qua non* of divinity. The ideal of Brahman-realisation or that of achieving the constant vision of the Universal Light, the Sun, illumining the inner as well as the

outer dimensions of being and consciousness was achieved by the seers by recourse to many esoteric sacrifices or *yogas* and the *vidyās*. The highest ideals of realisation mark the statements such as 'All this is verily Brahman', 'This Atman is Brahman', 'That thou art' etc. There is no questioning of the fact that this is a consummation of all spiritual aspiration, and is variously called *ānanda*, *amṛta*, *śānti* and *advaita*. The gaining of freedom from finitude, and crossing over the barriers of darkness or ignorance can best be seen as achievements of the seers. The gaining of Brahmanhood or Bliss, and no return to earth or into the cycle of births, have been fulfilments, practically. This is what all the Vedantas vouchsafe to be the highest, beyond which there is no higher.

However, looking at what Sri Aurobindo has written and said of a state of realisation and aspiration, Sri Sastry avers, that the achievements of the ancients were not the culmination expected by *the nature of the universal truth or being*. The spiritual illumination is not restricted to selected spots or areas only; its nature of penetration, revelation and elevation is overwhelmingly infinite, that what is called 'individual immortality' is only a minimum expectation. The *sādhana* is not complete till it brings its fruits of salvation, freedom and light to the hearts of all mankind. In other words, the ideal is not individual salvation, but universal. It should not be like individual waves on the ocean rising high, but the whole ocean to rise as one wave upto

the Heavens. Stated in different terms, the realisation of the Supermind over and above the levels of matter, life and mind is not the end, but it is bringing down of the Supramental grace to the level of matter, life and mind, so that it is felt as the transforming principle of all life on earth. It is then that matter ceases to work with its material limitations; so does life; and so does mind. It should be a transformation beyond limitations, a gaining of a universal freedom of infinite bliss at all levels of being—an identity of the Infinite, an inundation of bliss in all ‘vessels’ aspiring for it—that is the Delight of Being.

The Bhūma Vidyā, the Shāndilya Vidyā, the Vaisvānara Vidyā, the Madhu Vidyā and the Prāṇa Vidyā are all grist to this Vidyā of bringing down for earth the grace of the Lord, so that the meeting of the earth and heaven takes place.* This is opening a new chapter in the life of earth-dwellers, who not only live in delight, but shine in the lustre of Superconsciousness. It is a society of Gnostics, the future state of human evolution.

The challenge, however, is not to await the hour of God, which is sure to come, but to be fit ‘vessels’ to receive the grace, free ourselves and free

* Sri Sastry in a very illuminating way expounds this Sadhana of Sri Aurobindo in two of his well known contributions: *Sadhana*, and *The Supermind and Spiritual Achievement—Ancients and ourselves*. See T. V. Kapali Sastry: *Collected Works Vol. 2*.

all else. The consolidation of freedom lies in the ability to make oneself *the* point or base from which the Divine Force, now at its descent, gives all the fillip to the ascent of man to higher and more universal consciousness level, and to be a centre of an enlarging sphere of sparkling illumination and sweetness, spreading these across the horizons of human life, and sharing the benefits of the divine presence and of its transcending touch.

SECTION THREE



Sastriar at Sixty.

KAVI YOGI SHRI KAPALI SASTRY

Inaugural Address : Centenary Celebrations

3rd September 1986

DR. K. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN

Vice-Chancellor, Pondicherry Central University

Preamble :

I deem it a special privilege to be called upon to inaugurate this significant seminar to commemorate the Birth Centenary of Shri Kapali Sastry. I am grateful to the sponsors and specially to the learned President of this evening's function Shri M. P. Pandit who is one of the foremost authorities on Sri Aurobindo today, for having given me the opportunity to join the myriad of Sastry's students and admirers who have drunk deep from the enchanting and exhilarating works of Shri Kapali Sastry, to pay homage to this illustrious thinker.

Pondicherry — Consecrated Land :

Shri Kapali Sastry was encyclopaedic in his vast knowledge and profound experience in the field of vedic philosophy and yoga and it is fitting that his centenary is celebrated here, right in Pondicherry. Pondicherry is the place where Shri Kapali Sastry practised 'Sadhana' at the feet of his Master Sri Aurobindo and produced inspired works. This place that saw sages perform innumerable austerities, the place that then resounded with chants of many a vedic scholar, the place that

reverberated with the National songs of Sri Subramaniya Bharathi and the place that is sanctified by the divine genius of the Great Master Sri Aurobindo — is certainly an ideal locate for a seminar in honour of the centenary of an outstanding savant like Shri Sastry.

Sri Aurobindo School of University:

As you are all aware, the Pondicherry Central University has taken steps to implement its First prestigious project — ‘*The Sri Aurobindo School of Eastern and Western Thought*’. On this hallowed land of Pondicherry, we thought we must found a school named after the Master who gave a new dimension to the concept of Life.

Vision of Sri Aurobindo:

As an evidence of the prophetic insight of the Master, I can cite this instance. It is said that days before it took shape in the minds of people in power to make an atom bomb the Master could visualise it in his mind’s eye. Sitting far away in his Pondicherry retreat, he sang:—

“*A Scientist played with atoms and blew out
Thy Universe before God had time to shout*”

What a foresight? What a vision? what a pathos? Sri Aurobindo School will undertake research studies in Philosophy of Eastern and Western Thought and will act as a forum for scholars from the East and West. I am sure this school will be able to utilise the masterly contributions of Shri Kapali

Sastry in developing new interpretations of the vedas and upanishads.

Birth of a Prodigy:

It was exactly hundred years ago that Shri Vishweshwara Sastry got a brilliant son at Mylapore, Madras. The elder Sastry was himself a great Sanskrit scholar and ardent Sri Vidya Upasaka. The birth of the little Master on September 3rd of 1886 passed off without notice as no one imagined that this baby was going to be a prodigy of philosophy, penetrating into the depths of the vedas with a concern no one ever had before. No one knew then that this boy was going to be the cherished disciple of the great savant Sri Aurobindo and was going to bring out the quintessence of the Master's brilliant theses.

Childhood:

It was fitting that this boy was named after the presiding deity of Mylapore, the dancing Shiva, known as Shri Kapaleeswara. Even at the age of 12, young Kapali's deeds evidenced the striking potentialities of a multifaceted personality to be developed in the years to come. He learnt Sanskrit from his beloved father and was initiated into the mysteries of Sri Vidya. He scrupulously observed the regimen of the Pooja, Parayana and Japa. He had completed reading Ramayana 12 times even then.

Culmination of the East and West:

Added to his oriental orthodox education through his father, he could get English education in

the Hindu High School, which was the famous school where Right Hon'ble Shri V. S. Srinivasa Sastry worked as the famed Headmaster. It is no wonder that Kapali could match in English as a student even Right Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastry who was known as the Silver tongued orator.

A New Era:

When Kapali Sastry stepped into the 20th century, he was just 14 and people could see the radiant personality of Kavi Yogi Kapali Sastry by his dedicated study of Rig Veda and his interpretation.

The first three decades of the 20th century were sacred years as they saw the glories of an Augustan age, so to say, in the personalities that lighted this era.

Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda brought in a renaissance; Sri Rabin-dranath Tagore and Sri Subramania Bharathi paid glorious tributes to art, culture and literature. C. V. Raman and Jagdish Chandra Bose proved to the world that our soil is not lagging behind in science. Bhagavan Shri Ramana at Tiruvannamalai brought eternal bliss to the world and Sri Aurobindo became the vibrant voice of the pristine soul of India which was described by Romain Rolland as the "Completest synthesis that has been realised to this day of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe". Tilak and Gandhi were guiding the people towards political freedom. It was a great time when

*"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive;
But to be young was heaven".*

Multifaceted Personality:

At this eventful period Shri Kapali was developing rapidly his abilities and skills. By the time he was only 20, he had acquired mastery over many branches of learning which included Ayurveda and Astrology. The range and subtlety of his mind grew simultaneously with his fervour to acquire also the divine grace.

Shri A. R. Ponnusamy Iyer describes in detail about Sastry's multifaceted personality:

“Shri Sastry was a polymath, a scholar of unusual depth of learning in many shastras and sciences; Tarka, Vyakarana, Jyotisha, Ayurveda, Rasavada (Alchemy), Mantra Shastra and Vedanta. His acquaintance with English literature and western thought was not inconsiderable. But more than possession of such varied abilities and extensive learning what distinguished him above the common run of Pandits or scholars was the flame of spiritual aspirations that burned bright in him from boyhood, a flame in his mind and heart. He was not a pedestrian scholar, painfully adding fact to fact.

He was not a pugilistic philosopher, drinking delight of battle with his peers. Inspiration informed his scholarship and scholarship lent stability to his inspiration. His learning was not a load that he carried with painful effort, nor was it a mere garnishing for his shop window”.

Shri Ponnusamy Iyer's portrait is complete.

Unravelling the Secrets of Vedas:

With all these multiplicity of bewitching traits, his mind was deeply engrossed in unravelling the secrets of vedas. Though he muttered, as a small boy, the mantras and vedas as everyone did he was always searching to know the intrinsic, deep meanings of the vedic riks and mantras. Just like Swami Vivekananda was restless with all his scientific background until he could find his Master Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, our revered Kapali Sastri was also restless until he could find out his divine Master Sri Aurobindo.

Association with Shri Ganapati Muni:

It is relevant here to note that Shri Kapali Sastry reached his divine master with immense maturity after undergoing a series of experience with savants. It is like crossing several milestones before one reaches the final destination. He had already been burning with the fever of a great intensity to find out the real interpretations of the vedas. His association with *Kavya Kantha Shri Ganapati Muni* sharpened his wits in understanding the secrets of the veda. Sastry was deeply impressed by the astonishing range, depth and peaks of the Muni's mind and by his refreshingly original interpretation of our spiritual and philosophical tradition as enshrined in the vedas, upanishads and other sacred texts and Sastry found a fountain to quench his spiritual thirst. He became his disciple and by 1910 he had received illuminating directions from him.

Shri Ramana Maharshi and the 'Chinna Nayana':

The other great savant who moulded the personality of Kapali Sastry was Shri Ramana Maharshi. The Maharshi who rarely touched anybody with his hand, placed his hand on Sastriar's chest and indicated to him the location of the spiritual heart centre.

The affection with which Bhagavan Shri Ramana held Sastry was indicated by his reference to Sastry as "Chinna Nayana". Chinna Nayana has proved his divine love for Sage Ramana by his valuable expositions like Sat Dharshana Bhashya and Ramana Gita Prakasha. Even after this experience with Sri Ramana the "Thirsty soul" of Shri Sastry was still restless and when he heard about the divine teachings and works of Sri Aurobindo, he was eager to meet the Master. The light of the Master from Pondicherry reached him and the call of Sri Aurobindo was irresistible.

Master and Disciple—The First Meeting:

It was fitting that Kavi Yogi Sastri was introduced to Sri Aurobindo by our great national poet Shri Subramania Bharathi to whom Sastry was already known. The meeting took place with usual "sattva pariksha" because the time granted by the Master to meet him was 6.00 p.m. Sastry had to address at the same hour, a meeting for which he had come all the way from Madras to Pondicherry. Somehow he achieved the impossible — fulfilling the two engagements; one an ordinary meeting and the other the extraordinary one. The spiritual

interaction between the Master and the Disciple was instant and intense.

Sastry could feel the psychic experience when he met Sri Aurobindo and he was spell bound and electrified. This experience is narrated in Vol. II of his works in his own inimitable style:

“As soon as I saw him even from a distance there was set in motion, all of a sudden, a rapid vibratory movement in my body from head to foot. There was a continuous thrill and throb. I seemed to stand on the top of a dynamo working at top speed and it was as powerful as it was new. It lasted for nearly four to five minutes. It did not really stop at all. In fact it continued ever since for long and every time I went to see him later, or for his Darshan after his retirement the phenomenon tended to repeat itself”.

What else could this be except the bliss after the revelation?

Faith in India's Supremacy:

Shri Sastry always had high esteem for India's spiritual supremacy and this could be evidenced by an article he wrote on his Master in 1945:

“Political freedom is inevitable for India. Economic emancipation is sure to accompany or follow; as a consequence she is sure to grow strong. But what is the next step? What will a strong India do? Is she to repeat what all strong nations have done and are doing? No, she shall not — let us hope, will not. India with a true and renewed spirituality is an asset for mankind and the hope of the future”.

*Sri Aurobindo's 'Mother India' —
The Divine Mother Concept:*

Sastry was really inspired by Sri Aurobindo's vision of India as a Mother. It was given only to Sri Aurobindo in modern times to give to India a Powerful concept of the nation as a Divine Mother. To quote his own words:—

“Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is Power, Godhead, for all nations have such a Devi supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being. Such beings are as real and more permanently real than the men they influence, but they belong to a higher plane, are part of the cosmic consciousness and being and act here on earth by shaping the human consciousness on which they exercise their influence. It is natural for man who sees only his own consciousness, individual, national or racial at work and does not see what works upon it and shapes it, to think that all is created by him and there is nothing cosmic and greater behind it”.*

Unique Style of Sastry's Writing:

Shri Sastry quite frequently used the word *Light*. For example, “Lights on teaching”, “Lights on ancients”, “Lights on the fundamentals”, “Flame of White Light”, and “The way of Light” and so on. This is a clear indication of his love for removing the darkness from the world, by positively throwing light on Sri Aurobindo's teaching and all our ancient spirituality.

*On yoga II, Tome One (1958) P. 431.

Master's Spiritual Light:

Let me with your permission state here my own experience. My own acquaintance with the Master And His Spiritual light for several years now, has convinced me beyond question that Sri Aurobindo's thoughts not only cleanse the soul but brings a dazzling light into the dark caves of the human mind.

Questions and Answers and Questions:

Shri Sastry's works excelled in splendour of diction and style. He had a unique way of asking series of questions in the beginning and then elucidating the issues raised by him — a modification of the Socratic approach. For example under Sadhana, he begins his article like this:

“What is that Sri Aurobindo's yoga aims at? What is it that is new about in its means or ends? If it is a fact that the highest Truth or God is one, then are there not various ways of finding Him? What is it that the Integral Yoga seeks to achieve which cannot be got at by way of the well-known lines of spiritual discipline handed down to us by saints and seers from times immemorial? Has not in our own age, in recent times, the prophet of Dakshineswar lived and taught the sublime truth that all yogas and all forms of religious worship are but different roads leading to the same goal? How is it that so much stress is laid on the synthesis of diverse paths, of the various yogas while each of them has for its ultimate aim the realisation of the Higher Truth, the Self or

the Divine Being? Is not a single path sufficient, when fully pursued, to lead to the ultimate Truth?" It proceeded like this and at the end he explained what is supra mental yoga and how it is sometimes called Integral Yoga or Synthetic Yoga.

The Disciple on the Master:

Sastry was always at his best when he talked of his Master:—

"The *Ideal* he (Sri Aurobindo) stands for, the *Truth* he sees for himself and for us, the *Meaning*, of his life for man — these have been expounded by competent writers in magazine articles and separate volumes in English and many of the languages of India. The bulk of Sri Aurobindo's own writings towers — like their quality, high above the sum total of all the works of all the authors on his teaching. Nevertheless an article on Sri Aurobindo for this occasion may not be superfluous; for do we not continue to read over and over again the same Gita or the same Saptasthati? Do we keep down for good the Ramayana when we finish one reading? Or, do we not long to see oftener men and things we love or admire and adore? There are certain themes on which one can dwell long or any number of times, and still the pleasure is not exhausted, nor the benefit measured out. And Sri Aurobindo is such a sublime theme", says Shri Sastry.

Yes, Shri Sastry is right. The Natural Law of Economics — (the Law of Diminishing Returns) — which applies to all human endeavours will not apply to Sri Aurobindo and his sublime teachings

and this Universal Law stands defeated before the Great Master of Pondicherry.

Universal Love for All:

Shri Sastry initiated all who came into his circle into higher spiritual planes. This we infer from his notings in his diary.

“To transform those that are nearest and dearest to you (Sastry) and to get them initiated into a Higher life by employing a variety of means — by a mild push or a helpful blow, by a fascinating experience or an impressive feat or by some trivial trick of the Divine”.

What a noble mission and what a service to Humanity?

“Dead Woods Blossom”:

While talking about Upanishads Sastry says:

“The Upanishads — then, are not a book of dry knowledge they are throughout moistened with the *rasa of Sadhanas* inseparable from every aspect of the Truth that is aimed at severally or conjointly, for realisation. Of all the Vidyas of the ancient Vedantas the *prana vidya* is the most powerful, for in the higher and wider reaches of the Sadhana, it is *Brahma Vidya*, par excellence. It is the living Breath of the purusha, the Puissance of the Creative Consciousness, the Power of the Sole Indivisible Spirit that is the basis of the Prana Vidya; its aim is not laya, absorption, or going to the Beyond, — there are other Sadhanas that aim at it — but the realisation and successful forma-

tion of the individual Life — a Life that carries out its function as the function of the Life Universal, having no divided will of its own, but the one free Will and *Tapas* of the Ishwara, and extends its activity as part of the Life of the Supreme Spirit to a wider range, quite naturally, in such a way that one can exclaim with Satyakama”:

“If one were to tell this to a dried-up stump Sure, branches would shoot forth and leaves spring from it”

It is true of Shri Kapali Sastry also. He made dead woods blossom by his writings.

Mature and Meticulous Writer:

Though Sastry gained profound knowledge and experience even from the age of 12, he never wanted to write for publication until when he crossed 50. Till then he resolutely refused the requests of his friends that he should write. His humility was so great when he said that he had nothing authentic to tell the world and he does not care to be *a retail distributor of others books*. It was only when years of Sadhana, had transmuted reflection into conviction, and conviction into experience that he started to write. And to the end, he never wrote except when he had something original to say.

It was said of Macaulay that he read a volume to write a sentence. It might be said of Shri Sastry that the reflection of decades often lay behind what was written in a few words. He used the rare combination of resources—learning, reflection and

‘Guru Kripa’ for lighting up some of the dark corners and alleys of vedic lore. He was a master of Sanskrit, English and he has also brought out works in Tamil and Telugu evidencing his linguistic abilities.

Shri M. C. Subramanian, has helped us to visualise Sastryji’s stature by depicting the brilliant personality in his graphic picturisation:

“His eyes were the lamps of his soul and reflected and radiated an ethereal splendour. His form shone like unalloyed gold. His voice, rich, resonant and melodious seemed to be fashioned out of the harmonies from afar. And whenever he chanted a Rik or recited a poem — and what a way of reciting he had: all the fugitive rhythms would not fail to be electrified by his voice. At such moments, one would wonder whether the voice was human or divine”.

Conclusion :

In short, Shri Sastry was a great genius who dedicated himself to the cause of the enrichment of fellow beings by enabling them to realise the Spiritual Heritage of India and to learn the process of the Integral Yoga. He considered himself as a humble vehicle to uplift fellow beings in the spiritual path to etherial heights. In fact, he was a Spiritual Elevator.

It is a thrilling experience to study his imbibing works, as his very life is an example of dedicated surrender to the divine Master and his gospels.

The King Idea, The Master Act and Prayer—The Trinity :

Sri Aurobindo speaks of three things to ennoble

and enable us to reach greater heights '*The King Idea*', '*The Master Act*' and '*Prayer*'. Shri Kapali Sastry's magnificent spiritual personality took all the three paths at the same time and achieved the triple distinction in standing out in all the three as outstanding. This is something unique and an achievement unsurpassed. This approach could be possible only when one has Super Mind, sublimated by absolute surrender.

The Role of the Central University:

As I pinpointed in the beginning, the Central University, Pondicherry of which I have the privilege to be the first Vice-Chancellor will positively undertake research in all these three vital fields of Excellence especially based on the works of Sri Aurobindo and his disciple Shri Sastry.

Epilogue — Efficacy of Tapas towards Sadhana:

I have great pleasure in inaugurating this centenary celebrations and this seminar which I am sure will throw more light on the commanding heights of the thoughts of the great Master and his great disciple.

Let us hear the tributes Shri Sastry paid to the *Vedas* before we conclude. Of the grandeur of the *Vedas* especially the *Rig Veda*, Shri Sastry says:

“The *Vedas* are a literary record of uncommon realisations, of divine revelations and inspiration of our fore-fathers, great savants like *Vasistha* and *Vamadeva* and a host of others who in the course of their inner discipline — yoga — got many truths in the mystic path, truths beyond the grasp of the

sense but attainable by extraordinary means of felt discipline, truths for the vaster words of existence beyond the Ken of the physical eye, truths of the Gods, who are the functionaries in those worlds, their Powers, Shaktis and also those who are Shaktis in their own right. And who knows what other secrets lie embedded in this most ancient collection of Hymns of the Rig Veda”.

Sastri Emphasies:

“By *Tapas* is its shore to be Reached
Indeed, By *Tapas* is its shore to be Reached”.

Yes — By *Tapas* alone one can reach this shore with divine grace as the guiding light. By dedicated *Tapas*, Shri Sastry crossed the barriers and reached the shore so that humanity could benefit and prosper. Only one among the teeming billions can achieve this by *Guru Kripa* and Sastry was that one among many. Let us revere and remember his name Ever.

SRI KAPALI SASTRIAR

(At the Ashram Centre of Education 6th September 1986)

M. P. PANDIT

On this occasion of the Birth Centenary of Sastriar, I would like to take you back in history some eighty years back. The Bengal Partition agitation was at its height. A mammoth meeting had been called on the Marina beach at Madras and Bipin Chandra Pal was to address the concourse. During those days there was none who did not know of the trio, Bal, Lal and Pal. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal were public heroes who drew huge crowds. Tilak, as you know, was famous for his intellectual acumen, Lajpat Rai for his massive strength of personality and Bipin Pal for his thundering oratory. Well, Kapali Sastry was one of the young enthusiasts attending the meeting. As he was listening to the speech, some one by his side told him that what they were hearing was only fire-works; the real man behind the whole movement, planning, writing, inspiring, was behind the limelight. He was a lean Bengali, brilliant, breathing a fire of tapasya; he it was who wrote the flaming articles in the *Bande Mataram*. His name was Aravinda Ghose.

The young man's interest was aroused. He kept in touch with the writings in the *Bande Mataram* and later in the *Karmayogin*. As a keen

observer of the national scene, he followed the famous Alipore Trial, the subsequent retirement of Sri Aurobindo to Pondicherry, then a French possession. It was one evening in 1914 August, when he was returning home at Tiruvottiyur, that he was called by small shopowner in the lane and told: look here, here is something that would perhaps interest you, since you always read philosophy and such things. So saying, the good samaritan handed him the first issue of the ARYA that had just come out. Sastriar was already interested in Sri Aurobindo and to get a journal edited by him was truly marvellous. But how did it find its way into the hands of the grocer? At somebody's suggestion, he had inserted an advertisement to support a venture of a nationalist leader and he had received his voucher copy.

Sastriar took the issue home and started reading it with avid interest under his dim lamp-light at night. The very first page fascinated him; it was the beginning of the *Life Divine*. It was followed by other features among which was the *Secret of the Veda*. Sastriar was amazed. For the line of thought that Sri Aurobindo was propounding was precisely the same that he himself had chalked out and pursued during the preceding years. The solution to the problem of life given in the ARYA was also identical with his own. He read the entire issue of closely printed 64 pages that very night. And what is more, he read the whole issue every night thereafter till the next one arrived.

For Sastriar had thought and pondered over

these themes of moment ever since he began to think. He was deeply conversant with the Sastras and with modern thought. Born in an orthodox family of Vedic lineage, learning had been natural to him from the very beginning. He lisped his first alphabet in Sanskrit. His father, Sri Vishweshwar Sastry, was a scholar at the Connemara Oriental Library. He initiated young Kapali in Sri Vidya at the tender age of five. By the time he was seven the young boy had completed his first public reading of Valmiki Ramayana and was duly honoured when he read out the Pattabhishekham, the royal crowning Ceremony of Sri Ramachandra. He had completed the Ramayana 12 times by the time he was twelve.

But his father passed away very early leaving the family burden on the young shoulders of Kapali. Naturally his school career was chequered. But he equipped himself in the best traditions of the land and developed interests in diverse fields. Naturally, coming as he did from an authentic line of Sama Vedic tradition, he delved deep into the Vedic lore. Even then it had struck him odd that a Scripture like the Veda which was all along revered as the fountainhead of the best in Indian culture and spirituality was taken to mean very ordinary things, mundane aims with primitive means. He had instinctively felt that there was more to it than what appeared on the surface. He practised and studied the Sri Vidya tradition, the agamas, the various tantras. Of course the Upanishads held his attention (as his later *Lights on the*

Upanishads were to testify). Ayurveda, Rasa Sastra, astrology, astronomy, Sanskrit literature and rhetorics were among his interests. All along a deep spiritual discipline, *upasana*, was developing.

One day, when he was standing, doing his mantra-japa, in front of the Deity at the Tripura-sundari Temple near his house in Tiruvottiyur, an impressive personality with attendents walked in and recited a few verses in Sanskrit, obviously extempore. The next day again he came and finding the young man present in the same spot, he enquired about him. Sastriar repeated verbatim the verses that the distinguished visitor had recited the previous day; and that was the beginning of a long, fruitful Guru-Shishya relation between Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri (for that was name of the the luminary) and Kapali Sastry. Kavyakantha had acquired fame as a genius and spiritual Upasaka with accomplishments in poetry, literature, mantra sastra and allied spheres. Sastriar imbibed much from him in due course, not the least of this bequest being the Teacher's perceptions into the secret of the vedic mantras: the living interchanges between men and Gods and their relevance to the aspiring human soul at all times. It was Kavyakantha again who took Kapali Sastry to his Guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi at Arunachala and made it possible for him to learn and practise the Sage's Vichara Marga. A personal relation developed between the Maharshi and young Kapali as a result of which the young seeker struck new depths in his Quest.

Thus, Sastriar, had been pursuing an inner life of his own and developing a body of Thought in new directions—other than the traditionally accepted lines in orthodox circles. Sri Aurobindo's writings in the ARYA came to him with an invigorating touch and confirmed his intuitions. Especially the series on the *Secret of the Veda* in the ARYA acted as a tonic. And it was natural that when in 1917, he received an invitation from Pondicherry to participate in the Shankara Jayanti, he welcomed the opportunity as it would enable him to meet Sri Aurobindo. Accordingly he arrived at Pondicherry and went straight to the residence of Subramania Bharati who was living in exile at that time in the French Enclave. Sastriar knew Bharati earlier and he had also known that the poet was in contact with Sri Aurobindo. He hoped to meet the author of the Arya through the good offices of the patriot-poet. When he came to the house of Bharati, his little daughter was playing at the door-steps and took the visitor up the stairs.

As they were climbing the steps, they heard the poet singing in strident tones:

inda janmattil jayamundu, bhayamillai maname

Victory in this life is certain, O mind, fear there is none.

Mutual enquiries over, the talk drifted to certain friends in Madras. Suddenly, the poet burst out:

*Guhane paraman maghane,
guhaiyil valarum kanale!*

In the secret cave, O growing Flame,
Son, of the Supreme...

Sastriar was surprised at this mention of Kumara as the Flame in the heart of man — an essentially Vedic conception. He asked Bharati how he caught the idea. The answer was that he had been studying the Rig Veda from Aurobindo Ghose for some time. Mention of Sri Aurobindo led Sastriar to speak to Bharati about the object of his visit, — to meet Sri Aurobindo. Bharati replied that Sri Aurobindo was not inclined to meet people those days. All the same he wrote out a note to a friend who was attending on Sri Aurobindo at that time and an interview was arranged at 6 p.m. that evening.

He went to meet Sri Aurobindo with a lemon fruit in hand. It was a meeting between two scholars. Sastriar started speaking in Sanskrit. Sri Aurobindo asked the youngster who was still there if Sastriar knew English. And so the conversation went on in English. One of the questions related to the immediate possibilities of India. “Why possibility, it is a *certainty*”, replied Sri Aurobindo with emphasis. On his asking about the Hindu-Muslim problem, Sri Aurobindo replied that a *larger* Hinduism was the solution.

Thus ended his first interview with Sri Aurobindo.

Sastriar had been pursuing his line of sadhana under the benign grace of Sri Ramana Maharshi and a stage arrived when there was a only a thin

veil over the state of the sage's type of self-realisation. But he had an intimation from within that he had not come for that; it was for something else that he had taken birth. In the meanwhile he was having a peculiar experience every day extending over six months. During nights he used to be bodily carried away and thrown into one particular room somewhere. He sought to see Sri Aurobindo, that was in 1923. And, imagine his surprise when he was ushered in the presence of Sri Aurobindo to find it was the very room to which he used to be carried. That was the room where there is the Prosperity function every month now, at the entrance of the main Ashram building.

Another surprise waited for him. Sri Aurobindo's complexion had undergone a complete transformation; from the darkish hue of 1917, it had changed to golden. He mentioned it to Sri Aurobindo who nodded approvingly. "What more proof do I need of the truth of this Yoga?", he exclaimed. In the course of the talk, Sri Aurobindo said: Only two can give you what you want. One, the Mahashakti; the other, (pointing to himself) is...

That decided the future course of his life. His close relation, S. Duraiswami Iyer, brother of Kumaraswami, Sastriar's brother-in-law, was already in touch with Sri Aurobindo. Sastriar kept up the contact. And when the Ashram was started at Pondicherry, he commenced his regular pilgrimages on Darshan occasions. It was in 1928 August that his Guru, Vasistha Ganapati Muni (Kavya-

kantha) came for Darshan. When he was asked what was his impression after he had the Darshan, the sage who had been overwhelmed replied: *divya murtulu*, Divine Beings! About Sri Aurobindo, he said: Such a *puratana purusha*, Ancient Man, (so much of maturity on his face!) The Muni, however did not choose to stay at Pondicherry.

Sastriar had cast his lot. When at the outset of the commencement of the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo announced that thenceforth Mirra would be the Mother and be in charge of the Ashram, Sastriar wanted to know more about her. Sri Aurobindo had certain papers sent to him. They were his writing on the Four Powers of the Mother which he had just completed. Sastriar accepted it in toto and thereafter looked upon her as the Divine Mother whom he had worshipped all his life.

He was given permission to stay in the Ashram, though at the wish of his physical mother he continued to visit his family till 1938, the year she passed away. It may be interesting to know that when Sastriar mentioned about his mother's only wish, the Mother nodded and said that she (Sastriar's mother) had come to her and expressed her wish—of course on a subtle plane—which he could fulfil.

At the Ashram, Sastriar's life was simple. He took up some work at the Building Service, issuing paints when requisitions arrived. One day he found that whatever quantity he picked up from the tin was exactly of the weight that had been asked for. He did not need to weight it. He tested himself

again and again. There was no mistake about it. It was intuition in the physical.

He was particular in attending to this work punctually. I remember he used to have small nap after lunch before leaving for the Building Service office. He would retire at 12.30 p.m. telling me that he would be up at 12.55 so as to leave for the office by 1 p.m. And it would always be exactly 12.55, no alarm clock. These things were natural to him and he did not think of such capacities as unusual. His was a life of quiet discipline, always centred on his objective — the Divine. Even the smallest detail was related to that lodestar. He kept a low profile. I noticed that he did not read much. He started writing only late in life: either when there was a call on him from quarters which he did not like to refuse or there was an urge from within.

When the Ashram school was started, he became its first Sanskrit teacher. Students who were taught by him still recall the affectionate way with which he treated them. Mother gave special importance to his work as a teacher and let him know of it. Occasionally, Sri Aurobindo would refer to him some point of astrology or Sanskrit grammar. Purani was the messenger. When a reviewer in the *Modern Review* took exception to Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the compound *jivabhuta* in the phrase *para prakirtir jivabhuta* (Gita), holding that grammar did not permit that sense, Sastriar wrote an authoritative rejoinder proving that strict grammar did not permit any other interpretation than

what Sri Aurobindo had given: *prakriti* has become the *jiva*.

He was fond of rendering into Sanskrit verse some of the lines in Sri Aurobindo's poetry that appealed to him. When the first canto of the epic *Savitri* was first published as a fascicle, he took it up. This canto, as you know, is the most difficult in the whole poem. He would send up to Sri Aurobindo a few verses each day as soon as they were ready and the latter would go through them with care and attention. If any sense had been changed or grasped differently, he would note it and explain what he had meant. Purani took down these notes and they have been incorporated in his most helpful work on *Savitri*, *Approach to Savitri*. On one occasion, when a particular line was read out in its Sanskrit rendering, Sri Aurobindo exclaimed, 'he is a poet!' Sastriar always treasured that compliment.

It was in his sixtieth year that he commenced his commentary on Rig Veda. He undertook to work out the *adhyatmic*, spiritual, interpretation of the Riks, applying the clues given by Sri Aurobindo in his studies on the Veda, justifying his approach, tracing the consistency in the meaning and expounding the support provided by grammar in arriving at the purport of each. Each sheet was sent up to Sri Aurobindo. He had taken up the work which Sri Aurobindo had hoped to do in order to establish his thesis. He completed the First Ashtaka of the Rig Veda within about 3 years. He had hardly any reference books at hand. He worked single-handed, often waiting for hours before

putting his pen to the paper so as to get the right clue. He did not proceed further. When I asked him about it, he replied that the main work had been done and one could study the rest of the Samhita with ease using the clues that had been provided in this commentary. This work, *Siddhanjana*, Mystic Collyrium, has been acclaimed as an authentic standard work on the subject in all quarters. Some of the universities prescribed it for study in their higher courses.

His writings on the Upanishads, the Tantras, philosophy of Sanskrit grammar are classics. His commentaries on the key-works of Vasishtha Ganapati Muni viz. Umasahasram, Ramana Gita, Sat Darshanam, are authoritative expositions of the thought and vision of Sri Ramana Maharshi and the Muni. His biography Vasishtha Vaibhavam, in Sanskrit, breaks new ground in introducing the modern style of pithy, short sentences in Sanskrit writing.

His translations of some of the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother into Tamil and Telugu are much in demand. He was at ease while writing in either of these languages. Some one asked if Sastriar was from Jaffna. Jaffna, it will be recalled, is considered to be the home of Tamil, classical Tamil.

One scene stands out before my mind's eye. Sri Aurobindo had just passed away on December 5, 1950 to the dismay and bewilderment of all. Disciples and devotees were taken unawares. Everybody thought of the future of the Ashram: would

the ashram be able to continue? There was a big question-mark facing everybody, almost everyone. At that moment, a columnist from Madras, Kumar (an old student of his, M. C. Subramaniam by name) interviewed Sastriar and asked him many searching questions. The full report was splashed on the front page in a prominent weekly of Madras; the central thrust was: the MOTHER WILL CARRY ON. He explained how the Mother had always been the Shakti charged with this mission and Sri Aurobindo's physical withdrawal made no essential difference to the situation. This emphatic statement from the lips of a personage of Sastriar's stature made a tremendous impact, halted the tide of scepticism and frustration. It was a landmark.

KAPALI SPEAKS

(Compiled from Sastriar's Writings

by PRABHAKAR NULKAR)

Enthusiasm is the fulcrum of action in the case of many men and women. If that is chilled even a little, the activity itself stops.

* * *

Remember that life is never a series of successes and joys alone, even failures and miseries have their uses in God's scheme.

* * *

No gale stays on, it moves, passes on at an incredible rate of speed. All the time, it does its mischief, leaves its impress; but we survive, that is luck as they say.

* * *

That anything can happen at any time is a terrible truth in this world.

* * *

The sincerity with which you approach determines the results. This is the law of the subtle workings of nature.

* * *

Those that fear most are — by reaction the most cruel.

One who lacks happiness within finds no happiness without. He feels dissatisfied with everything. The most common characteristic of such persons who have no 'antah sukha' is fault-finding and tyrannising over others.

* * *

Those who talk most loudly of their own defects and deprecate themselves are usually the most self-conceited.

Fear ultimately develops into hatred. Fear gives rise to a suppressed anger which later hardens into hatred:

* * *

Fear, anxiety, apprehension—these are very common features of everyday life in the world.

* * *

Every one finds, here or elsewhere what he wants. He sees what he seeks to see—good or bad. Other things do not catch his eye.

* * *

Self—examination requires courage.

To receive, to treat and to send off people with consideration and politeness is a quality natural to the great.

* * *

In all matters—spiritual and temporal—when anyone asks for help or favour which is being done to him, it fills the needy heart with spontaneous feelings of happiness and gratitude if the benefactor disarms him, makes him feel that, after all what he asks for is nothing much and that the joy of giving on the part of the donor is much more than the joy or contentment of the other.

* * *

To trust people, to note only the good side of others, is a sign of *laxmi-kala*, receptivity to forces of happiness and prosperity. Cynicism, distrust and other allied qualities indicate the opposite opening.

* * *

One without thought has no cares. One without desires has no grief.

Capacity gives satisfaction or contentment, *trpti*, not pride, to a healthy mind.

* * *

To move freely with little minds is to invite their insolent disdain.

* * *

Those who circulate an opinion coming from others usually share that opinion.

* * *

Gratitude is a psychic feeling. Rarely one in a hundred is capable of it. What passes for it in life is usually a pretense of it—something of what has been humourously described as ‘an expression of a lively expectation of greater favours to come.’

* * *

To offer bribes is tantamount to taking them. For, to corrupt another for one’s own selfish ends is as sinful and unspiritual, if not more, as corrupting oneself. To pollute oneself is one thing, to pollute another for one’s selfish purpose is another and much more despicable.

* * *

A constant critical attitude to others is usually a sign of unfitness for spiritual life, where the building up of one’s inner perfection is the first occupation.

* * *

There are men who would not tolerate from others even a fraction of what they themselves constantly inflict on those around. It is akin to simian psychology. The monkey delights in playing pranks

on others but it violently resents even a casual stone-throw at it.

* * *

It is a healthy principle to make it a point to notice only the good things in the person whose lot is cast with ours. His weaknesses may be remembered after he is gone, so that one does not suffer any pull nor exert any push towards the departed.

* * *

Before we, criticise others for their 'bad qualities', it is necessary to look at ourselves and see if none of these qualities are not seen in ourselves at some time or other. The fact is all these 'qualities'—good and bad—are part of the Universal Nature and when these waves come over, they victimise whoever is open to them at the moment. They manifest themselves through them. These 'defects' etc. do not specially belong to any particular individual.

* * *

Nirahankara, absence of ego, is indispensable; often you think you have no ego left. Remember, wherever there is a stress on your part, there lurks the ego.

* * *

Ego and desire are the main roots of all suffering in the world. Man is obsessed with his own importance, his own self and can't bear the other egos. He busies himself with the affairs of others, solely with a view to satisfying himself of their relative inferiority and his own superiority.

* * *

